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This issue dedicated to Edward Bernds, a great
director and screenwriter.

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Cult Movies

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Deep Inside Cult Movies

The Importance of Being Rondo



by Michael Copner, Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the 25th issue of the magazine designed to satisfy all your cult film needs. Among so many other reasons to celebrate, we are especially delighted about the return of Rondo in the upper left corner of our cover. This is one case where it can truly, honestly be assured that the audience "asked for it." Rondo Hatton may be the current symbol of cult cinema, judging from the countless requests we received for his return to our cover. Who would ever imagine!

Born on April 22, 1894, he was the only child of Stewart and Emily Hatton of Hagerstown, Maryland. A popular, sports minded kid in school, remaining photos of him do not foreshadow that the handsome youngster would emerge into being as The Creeper of the movies. That happened while he was serving his country overseas. Entering active military service during World War I, Rondo was exposed to German nerve gas which damaged his lungs and caused acromegaly, a disease of the pituitary gland, effecting an accelerated secretion of growth hormones. The result is the enlargement of bones, muscles and internal organs.

Returning to civilian life, Rondo worked as a newspaper reporter in Tampa, Florida. While covering the local filming of a United Artist feature (Hell Harbor, 1930), Rondo was sighted by direc-

tor Henry King and hired for a short scene. In 1936 Rondo and his wife Mabel moved to California, settled into Beverly Hills, and a modest film career was begun. With his increasingly distorting features, Hatton found work portraying thugs and henchmen in a steady stream of films, often unbilled in small parts. He can be seen in small parts in *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939), *Moon and Sixpence* (1942), and *Ox-Bow Incident* (1943). It's been reported that he appeared in around one hundred films during his ten-year career. (He died in 1946 at the age of 52).

Lon Chaney, Jr. became a star simply because Universal Pictures said he was: his stardom lasted from his first Wolf Man portrayal to his last. With even more heartless exploitation, Rondo became a horror star in a series of five films at Universal, simply because of his disfiguring disease. His first was *Pearl of Death* (1944), a Sherlock Holmes mystery, followed by *Jungle Captive* (1945) the final entry in the Ape Woman trilogy. These were followed by *Spider Woman Strikes Back* (1946), *House of Horrors* (1946) and *The Brute Man* (1946), the final film being disowned by Universal and sold off to Producers Releasing Corporation for distribution. In each of these Rondo portrayed a murderous henchman who killed on command, serving as a kind of Frankenstein monster with a human face.

Judging from their press releases, Universal held very mixed feelings toward their new monster. A photo caption for *Pearl of Death* extolled the virtues of their new discovery, reminding us that Wolf Man and Frankenstein were just make-believe whereas this new guy was a genuine monster. The last line in the blurb states: "He is no make-up problem."

Now, how did Rondo happen to become a regular fixture on our covers? Credit goes to Dave Stevens for that. The great artist designed our covers from #s 8 through 15, and he decided we must have a mascot in that empty upper left corner. Dave had previously introduced a Rondo character into his *Rocketeer* comics, which in turn became a part of the *Rocketeer* movie. Having a piece of Rondo art on file, Dave introduced him on our 9th cover, and the rest is history.

When Rondo died I doubt if he knew he would be a cult icon fifty years later. He was merely a working actor who wanted to keep active on the screen, and to that end he was successful. It might confound a 1990s cult video consumer that Rondo never wanted to "stay sick" or appear in the world's worst film, or anything else that seems mandatory to be cultish now.

Actually, many cult icons continue to walk the streets of Hollywood, waiting for something to happen. We've told about some of them in these pages. Like Rondo, they'd just like to work. Alive, most of them aren't worth a second glance. All kinds of potential cult figures, here in town, available for work, behind in their rent. Except for the editor at *Psychotronic Video* magazine, nobody seems to know or care. But once they're dead! Just wait until they're dead! Then the major media may start with the, "Oh, why didn't somebody do something with these wonderful people while they were still with us!" Then the Tim Burtons will come out of the woodwork, ready to do their million dollar biopics about Titus Moody, Vampiria, Korla Pandit—a whole Hollywood full of exotics and ununals looking for a job.

If Rondo is popular now, he has become representative of an idealistic dream we share about the movies, about show business. Most of our favorites are more popular today than they were during their lives and careers. The greatest cult film stars tended never to win any industry awards or recognition, some of them never received any worthy critical acclaim at all. But their work lives on via video, and the books and magazines which have emerged in the 1990s to illuminate the darker realms of filmland.

Cult Movies magazine will continue in this mission, providing information on any films that are not mainstream. Our next issue will be another double issue joined by Forrest J Ackerman and his *Spacemen*—a concept that may be a regular feature from now on. And we intend to keep Rondo up there where he belongs, a guardian and a symbol of everything that's worthy about the notion of Movies that are Cult.

On with the show.
Michael Copner,
Editor



I just picked up issue 24 and have been enjoying it this morning. Loved the inside back cover of Rondo, and the front cover was pretty great. The double-feature article and graphics are wonderful. A nice "Deep Inside" essay too! The letters section has always been fun and is plenty informative itself. And as for the continuing debate on the low-brow edge, I vote for continued smut as usual. I'd say your instincts are pretty good with the melange of comedians, monsters, porn stars you've come up with. Nostalgia and sex are always popular.

John Whisler
Los Angeles, CA

In all my years of collecting I've never been a philatelist, but in the past few years some great stamps have turned up almost forcing the hobby on me. The Japanese Post Office issued stamps featuring Osamu Tezuka (creator of Astroboy), and the U. S. mail has given us musicians such as Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Howlin' Wolf and Elvis. Then came actors like Dean and Monroe, and now the "Monsters" set. The closest my own country's P. O. came to a cool stamp is the "classic car parked at the drive-in theater" stamp. Did Mexico ever issue a Santo stamp?

Phil Berry
South Brisbane, Australia

While casually surfing the net a few days ago I came across a saddening bit of news when I read that John Ashley had passed away on October 4 of last year. The man who had been associated, as an actor and producer, with many of my favorite films was gone at age 62.

John Ashley's career spanned from the '50s to the '90s. From his early days in teen B features like *High School Caesar* and *Frankenstein's Daughter* to his recurring roles in the AIP Beach Movies his flexibility allowed him to effortlessly make the crossover from star to supporting actor.

My favorite phase of his varied career was during his long collaboration with Filipino director Eddie Romero. Starting with *Brides of Blood* in 1968, Ashley and Romero teamed for a number of enjoyable horror films including cult favorites *Beast of the Yellow Night* and *The Twilight People*. The series proved so successful that Roger Corman eventually joined them as a co-producer on some of their later efforts.



While working in the Philippines, Ashley also gained experience as a co-producer. Back in the states he would go on to produce televisions *The A-Team*. After that success he produced the great (but unfortunately short-lived) series *Werewolf*.

Ashley led an interesting career, his ability to wear many hats giving it unusual longevity. Here's hoping he is long remembered.

Steve Mason
Los Altos, CA

Loved your interview on filmmaker Robert C. Chinn, though I thought it too short! A man of this caliber deserved more pages. I'd welcome a "part two" to this director's interview, and notice you haven't been shy about printing a "command performance" interview or article when someone proves popular and interesting to the readers.

Cult Movies is truly a daring magazine. How many publications would have the guts to feature a director of John Holmes films in a mainstream rag? The era of adult filmmaking appealed to many couples. It was entertainment, not sleaze, and Mr. Chinn helped shape that era and made some of the greatest films ever. I don't see any other magazine out there taking the chances you do, mixing the genres and doing it with class and intellect, the way it should be done. Film is film, and you prove that time and time again in your excellent magazine. Cheers!

Kathryn Reed
San Francisco, CA

I recently found my book, *Written Out of Television* listed on the George Reeves web site by Jim Nolt. Along with mine was the Chuck Harter book, *Superboy and Supergirl: The Lost Videos*. As a longtime fan of Superman, and a television researcher, I'd very much like to secure a copy of that book, which Mr. Nolt says is excellent and still available. Looking forward to reading it. In the meantime, here's a photo of me from my work as an alien in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

Steve Lance
Howell, NJ

I was saddened to read of the death of screenwriter Mark Patrick Carducci. I corresponded with him after he had released *Flying Saucers Over Hollywood*, and he was a very kind and supportive individual. I hope he will be remembered with respect and fondness rather than judged for his final action.

John O'Dowd
Rockaway, NJ

One of the greatest screen Tarzans is Lex Barker. May 1998 is the month of importance to all Barker fans, for he was born on May 8, 1919 and he died on May 11, 1973. This year will be the 25th anniversary of his death. Please run an article on him, interview his friends in the motion picture industry, and help his loyal fans remember him.

Dennis Wong
Kowloon, Hong Kong

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FILM & VIDEO REVIEWS



The Return of Chandu

Serial, 12 chapters, Sinister Cinema, \$24.95; *The Return of Chandu*, feature version, Sinister Cinema, \$16.95, and *Chandu on the Magic Isle*, Sinister Cinema, \$16.95.

Cast: Bela Lugosi - Frank Chandler/Chandu; Maria Alba - Princess Nadji; Clara Kimball Young - Dorothy Regent; Dean Benton - Bobby Regent; Phyllis Ludwig - Betty Regent; Lucien Prival - the High Priest Vindyan.

In 1932 Lugosi was selected to play the evil Roxor to Edmund Lowe's bland Chandu the Magician in the lavishly produced Fox film of the same name. The film was hampered by an uninspired screenplay, but even so, the diabolically maniacal Lugosi in this ultimate villain role effortlessly stole the show from the ostensible hero.

Perhaps *Chandu* was not the commercial success that the Fox people had envisaged. In any case, the company was going through financial upheavals which would result in four years' time in the company being merged with Darryl Zanuck's 20th Century company. In any case, rather than produce a sequel to *Chandu*, Fox sold the film rights to its one-time producer, Sol Lesser, who set about adapting it to serial format for the Saturday afternoon crowd. This was not a particularly difficult task, considering that Chandu had originated as a radio serial. And Lesser selected Lugosi, this time to play the wholly benevolent Chandu, master of the Yogic arts of the East.

The serial is obviously cheaply produced and again suffers from an uninspiring screenplay, which fails to make full use of its mystic hero's powers in a series of rather repetitious and nonsensical incidents. On the other hand, the serial benefits from a capable supporting cast. Maria Alba, with her charming Spanish accent, former well-known silent actress, Clara Kimball Young, and Dean Benton and Phyllis Ludwig, as Chandu's nephew and niece, Bobby and Betty, are all superior to their counterparts in the feature version. Only the villains seem less than awe-inspiring, Lesser having obviously run out of the truly ominous candidate when he cast Lugosi as the hero.

The plot of the serial, such as it is, consists of the unceasing efforts of the priests of the Cat Goddess, Ubasti, from the lost island of Lemuria (located somewhere around Catalina Island, it would seem) to kidnap the Princess Nadji, being as they require an Egyptian princess with royal blood in order to revive the embalmed body of the priestess Ossana, and Nadji just happens to be the *only* living Egyptian princess. Of course, various of the schemes are thwarted thanks to Chandu's Yogic powers but finally the cultists succeed in transferring Nadji and the setting of the movie to "Lemuria" (actually the RKO back lot).

Chandu gets separated from the others and Billy is subjected to the Descending Knife routine, only to be rescued by Chandu in the nick of time. Chandu also rescues the only remaining White Magician on the island, and he leads Chandu to his cave, where Chandu is able to contact the Yogi, who gives him permission to

use the High Incantation, provided, for some reason, that he agree to renounce the Princess first.

Appearing in the cavern-like temple where the cultists are in the process of bringing Ossana back to life, Chandu literally brings the house down and all the heroes escape safe and sound.

Contrary to his usual practice, Lugosi not only lives, but he actually gets the girl in the end! He even gets to kiss her, although you have to look really closely to see the quick peck he plants on her lips.

The film lacks the artful art direction of the original film. The settings are unimaginative and cheap-looking. The costumes of the cult members look suspiciously like pillow-cases which have been altered.

The situations and even some of the dialogue are recycled several times throughout the film. However, one must keep in mind that these films were intended primarily for juvenile audiences, who watched them spread over (in this case) a 12-week period, so one could, of course, in such a case, get away with a little repetition.

The cliff-hanger was a staple of the serials, and this one is no exception, whether Chandu's car appears to be heading over a cliff or a poisoned dart is aimed at him, the audience had to return the following week to find that the car stalled just at the edge of the cliff or that Chandu was able to jump out of the way just as the dart whizzed past him. It was all harmless, escapist fun, of course.

There is obviously an audience for serials today, as there are many available on videotape, usually produced by Hollywood's Poverty Row studios. But, *The Return of Chandu* is of primary interest, of course, because of the presence of Bela Lugosi in the title role. According to Robert Cremer's biography, Lugosi was typecast so thoroughly that one reviewer described his performance as the hero as "convincingly sinister," despite the fact that he was wearing a white turban for a change! In fact, Lugosi's other biographer and "Lugosiphile extraordinaire," Arthur Lennig, told this reviewer just a few weeks ago that he feels that Lugosi's portrayal of Chandu very much reflected his real personality. If one actually observes Lugosi as Chandu, rather than judging him based on his reputation, one will see that he often utilizes a rather wide-eyed and innocent expression, as opposed to the customary menacing glare which he often employed in his villain roles.

This was Lugosi's hunkiest period; the film was made just after he completed *The Black Cat*, and there are some scenes in the first part of the movie where he looks suitably gorgeous. He even gets to wear the captain's hat and blue flannel blazer which was de rigueur for yachting, since at one point in the film he charts a motor vessel. However, during most of the action on Lemuria, having been shipwrecked, he tends to look rather less dapper than usual. This was Lugosi's only performance as an action hero, but deferring to the fact that he was 52 at the time, the action is not terribly strenuous and not terribly exciting, either.

Since this film is in the public domain, it is currently

available in many video versions and as is usually the case, they are of widely varying quality. I understand that the original negative may have been stored on the Fox lot and may have been destroyed years ago in a fire that apparently destroyed the original negatives of a number of Fox films as well. Sinister Cinema, however, has recently acquired upgraded prints of both the serial and feature versions of the film, and Greg Luce, who runs Sinister Cinema, frankly told me that they are the best that he has seen anywhere.

I already owned a copy of the Rhino Video version of the serial, and found that it was reasonably good, although there were quite a few splices in the prints and the sound had a noticeable hiss in the background. Sinister's versions, although not perfect, are substantially clearer prints and they are missing that annoying background hiss.

Some of the splices in Rhino's version abbreviate some of Lugosi's speeches. In Sinister's version, these are complete. For example, in the first chapter, where Chandu is explaining to the Princess Nadji the nature of the threat against her, Chandu says in the Rhino version, "But have no fear. [splice] Don't be afraid, my dear." Sinister's version plays as follows:

"But have no fear. We have faced dangers before, have we not? We'll do it again! It is better to know the reason, so that we may fight it out. Don't be afraid, my dear." The additional dialog will be significant to true Lugosi aficionados.

Lugosi may have been gone over 40 years, but his films are still providing good entertainment today. And to any Lugosiphile, Sinister's upgraded versions are well worth the purchase price, as they are a significant improvement over the versions which were previously available.

Reviewed by Johanne L. Tournier

Plague of the Zombies

1966, 90 mins. Dir. John Gilling, Prod. Anthony Nelson-Keys, Scr. John Elder & Peter Bryan, Photog. Arthur Grant, Ed. Chris Barnes, Music: James Bernard, Make-Up: Roy Ashton, Cast: Andre Morell, Diane Clare, John Carson, Jacqueline Pearce, Brook Williams and Alex Davion. A Seven Arts-Hammer Production.

Although it is not in the same league as some of their horror classics from the late-fifties and early-sixties (such as *Horror of Dracula*, *The Revenge of Frankenstein*, and *The Brides of Dracula*), *Plague of the Zombies* has been one of the more neglected films produced by Hammer, so its recent re-release by Anchor Bay gives film buffs the welcome chance to re-assess the movie.

Directed by John Gilling, *Plague of the Zombies* was filmed back to back with *The Reptile*, using many of the same cast, crew and sets, and together they form what has become known as Hammer's "Cornwall Double", so dubbed because both films take place in small Cornish villages. While *The Reptile* is atmospheric and beautifully photographed, I find *Plague of the Zombies* to be the most effective and consistently interesting film of the two.

Containing a uniformly strong cast, *Plague of the Zombies* centers on Peter Tompison (Brook Williams), a young doctor under pressure to explain all the mysterious deaths taking place in his village. Calling on the help of his distinguished mentor Sir James Forbes (Andre Morrell), the pair trace the deaths back to village squire Clive Hamilton (John Carson), a voodoo priest who is killing off the local young men then resurrecting them to work in the dangerous shafts of his decaying tin mine—a treacherous task which they refused to undertake while they were alive. Hamilton also uses his voodoo practices to try and empower Tompison's wife Alice (Jacqueline Pearce, whose beautiful big eyes give her the look of a startled fawn) and Forbes' young daughter Sylvia (Diane Clare).

Like a lot of Hammer films, *Plague of the Zombies* does take a while for its story to kick into high gear.

Bela Lugosi

in



with
MARIA ALBA

CLARA KIMBALL YOUNG

LUCIEN PRIVAL

JOSEF SWICKARD

PHYLLIS LUDWIG

CYRIL ARMBRISTER

DEAN BENTON

MURDOCK MacQUARRIE

BRYANT WASHBURN WILFRED LUCAS

ADAPTATION AND DIALOGUE by BARRY BARRINGER

Story Advisor—HARRY CHANDLER

(by arrangement with JESSE L. LASKY)

New and Different!

However, upon repeated viewing, those early scenes become much more interesting than they at first seem, particularly in terms of character development. As one might expect, the film has sumptuous sets and costume designs, and the cinematography of Arthur Grant is easy to appreciate when watching Anchor Bay's almost pristine, letterboxed print.

Plague of the Zombies is also one of those rare horror films from the sixties which still has the power to shock even the most jaded of today's viewers. Three scenes in particular linger in the mind long after the film has ended: the sight of a zombie dumping the body of Alice in a ditch by the tin mine (where it lands at the feet of a terrified Sylvia), the subsequent resurrection and decapitation of Alice, and an extended dream sequence where Tompson finds himself being menaced by a horde of zombies rising from their graves—one of the most classic and powerful scenes in Hammer's rich history, and one which instantly brings to mind moments from *Night of the Living Dead*, which followed two years later.

It's great to see Anchor Bay taking so much care with releases such as this. Apart from its beautiful packaging, with inner sleeve liner notes and stills, this tape also includes two original trailers for *Plague of the*

Zombies, including one for its double-bill with *Dracula*, *Prince Of Darkness*, where girls were given free "Zombie Eyes" while boys received "Dracula Fangs"!

Other Hammer films available from Anchor Bay include *The Reptile*, *Quatermass and The Pit*, and *Hound of the Baskervilles* and others to follow soon.

Reviewed by John Harrison

The Embalmer

1965, 77 mins. Dir: Dino Tavella, Prod: Guido Nart, Scr: Antonia Walter, Gian Battista Mussetto, Paola Lombard & Dino Tavella, Photog: Mario Parapetti, Ed: Gian Battista Mussetto, Cast: Maureen Lidgard Brown, Gin Mart, Alcide Gazzotto, Alba Broto, Elmo Caruso. Released by Walter Monley Enterprises, Inc.

Originally titled *Il Mostro di Venezia* (*The Monster of Venice*), this Italian import was the second and final feature to be directed by Dino Tavella, who died in 1969 at the age of 49. While *The Embalmer* might not be an outstanding epitaph to a directorial career, there are enough interesting moments in the film to make it worthwhile viewing for horror fiends, particularly those who have a penchant for European fare.

The threadbare plot of *The Embalmer* centers around

the hunt for a madman who frequently dons scuba gear and abducts pretty women along the canals of Venice. Taking them to his decayed, subterranean monastery, the villain embalms his captives, then worships them while donning a hooded robe and rubber skull mask. Despite the obvious danger, a group of attractive young schoolgirls decide to visit the area, instantly finding themselves as potential targets of the Embalmer.

While it has many scenes that were obviously intended as pure filler (coming off at times like a tourism promo), this film still moves along at a lively pace, with a particularly enjoyable climax taking place in the Embalmer's dank lair. The black & white photography of Mario Parapetti is a real standout, giving the film a great noirish atmosphere, and making use of shadows and darkness to create tension and mystery. There are also a number of odd visual touches, such as a nightclub entertainer who emerges on-stage from an upright coffin, and the way the film freeze-frames on the face of each victim moments before she is approached by the Embalmer. The editing style of Gian Battista Mussetto is also rather interesting, occasionally creating sudden, disorienting jumps in time and place.

The major fault with the American version of *The*
(continued)

Embalmer is its atrocious dubbing. Although it is supposed to be a whodunit, the same voice seems to have dubbed several of the major characters, making it almost impossible to guess who the Embalmer really is.

The *Embalmer* is available (in a letterboxed print) from Sinister Cinema, both on its own or as part of their "Drive-In Double" specials (where it is paired with Michael Reeves' *The She-Beast*). The original Italian language version is also available from Video Search of Miami.

Reviewed by John Harrison

The Sign of the Zombies

Motion picture history is loaded with examples of projects that were announced but, for one reason or another, never realized. One that immediately springs to mind is *A Day At The United Nations*, a Marx Brothers comedy planned by director Billy Wilder. The collaboration between these talents sure sounded promising, but an ailing Chico Marx was uninsurable, and the project fell through.

Likewise, 20th Century Fox's *Pearl Harbor*, a Betty Grable musical on the studio's production schedule in mid-1941, was abandoned after December 7th of that year, for obvious reasons.

Other projects were strictly "created" for publicity purposes. *The Day The Earth Turned Backwards*, announced in 1952 as a feature-length Three Stooges comedy that would spoof *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, was merely the product of a press agent's hyperactive imagination.

One of the most intriguing of these failed projects was *The Sign of the Zombies*, a 15-chapter serial planned by producer Sherman S. Krellberg. Krellberg, a former producer of stage plays, had been responsible for the astoundingly inept *The Lost City* (1935), considered by many to be a low point, if not the absolute nadir, of movie serials. Krellberg distributed *The Lost City* on a "states rights" basis and made a sizeable profit. He poured this profit into reissues of old "B" Westerns, earning even more money.

In April 1940 Krellberg announced that he had signed heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis to play the lead role in *The Sign of the Zombies*. Krellberg went on to explain that the film would be concerned with the activities of G-men "routing out racketeering gangs who prey upon Negro communities." Like *The Lost City*, Krellberg intended *The Sign of the Zombies* to be primarily a serial, although he would make a feature version available to exhibitors as well. (*The Lost City* was released as a 12-chapter serial, and in two feature versions: a 108 minute version, and a 74 minute version that covered the plot up to a certain point then followed by eight regular serial chapters.)

Although having Joe Louis in the serial was an exploitable bit of casting, it was hardly an artistic asset. Louis, like the majority of famous athletes who turned up in films (then and now), was sorely lacking in terms of thespian skills, even though he had starred in *The Spirit of Youth* (1938), which was loosely based on his boxing career. When Louis was called upon to deliver a brief line of dialogue in *This Is The Army* (1943), he was barely able to stammer out the words. And yet, since dialogue was superfluous in serials anyway, he might have been ideally suited to the format, what with the flurry of fisticuffs in an average chapterplay.

Production on *The Sign of the Zombies* was supposed to begin on May 1, 1940; it never did, and there were no follow-up announcements. Krellberg went on to handle reissues of *White Zombie* (the Lugosi thriller), *Rocketship* (the feature version of the first *Flash Gordon* serial), and *Mars Attacks The World* (feature version of *Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars*). Later, he became involved in television production.

There have been other, far more prestigious projects that have fallen by the wayside. Yet *The Sign of the Zombies* sounded unique (and wild) enough to make one genuinely regret that Krellberg wasn't able to pull



off his bizarre concept.

Essay by Ted Okuda

Race With The Devil

1975, 84 mins. Dir: Jack Starrett, Prod: Wes Bishop, Scr: Lee Frost & Wes Bishop, Photog: Robert Jessop, Ed: Allan Jacobs, Cast: Peter Fonda, Warren Oates, Loretta Swit, Lara Parker. A Saber Maslansky Production, released by 20th Century Fox.

This effective horror/action/road movie hybrid is the type of film that 1970s drive-ins used to thrive on. However, despite its roots being planted firmly in the low-budget exploitation genre, *Race With The Devil* also manages to capture that sense of "stranger in a strange land" alienation which also permeated some of the more mainstream films of the time, such as John Boorman's *Deliverance*.

After an atmospheric opening credit sequence, where Leonard Rosenman's sinister music plays while tinted fog rises from behind the silhouette of a malignant looking tree, we are quickly introduced to our main characters. Frank (Warren Oates) and Roger (Peter Fonda) are best friends and partners in Cycle World, a company which manufactures racing dirt bikes. Together with their wives Alice and Kelly (Loretta Swit and Lara Parker), they decide to take off for the

ski slopes of Aspen in Frank's brand new, state of the art recreational vehicle.

The first day of their journey, the foursome pull off the highway and decide to set up camp by an isolated creek. Late that night, while sharing a few drinks, Frank and Roger witness the execution and sacrifice of a young woman by a group of Satanists. When the coven discover that they are being watched, it marks the beginning of a cross state pursuit, with the two couples not knowing where to turn nor who to trust.

Apart from a couple of minor flaws (one of which is the flat, TV movie look which the film sometimes exudes), *Race With The Devil* manages to work on just about every level. According to some sources, *Two-Lane Blacktop* director Monte Hellman was originally set to helm this picture, but he was replaced by Jack Starrett after just a couple of days of filming. If this is indeed true, then Starrett should be commended for doing such a fine job at short notice. Starrett keeps his direction extremely tight, and at under eighty-four minutes the film barely has an ounce of fat on it. The stunts and exciting chase sequences are masterfully handled, as are the moments of suspense. There is also an eerie creepiness which pervades many of the scenes, such as when Kelly gets the uncomfortable feeling that everyone is watching her while she is swimming in a trailer park pool.

Without doubt one of the best American actors of the sixties and seventies (and sadly not fully appreciated until after his untimely death), Warren Oates delivers yet another finely drawn-out performance. While he's not as outstanding as he was in *Two-Lane Blacktop* or *Cockfighter* (his two definitive performances from that era), Oates had the ability to make his characters seem so believable and real, and he interacts well with Peter Fonda, who also delivers one of the better performances of his post-*Easy Rider* years. Although Swit and Parker also come across well, they are not really given much to do, and are relegated mainly to looking scared and screaming hysterically. Rounding out the cast are R. G. Armstrong, Paul A. Partian (best known as the invalid Franklin in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*), as well as cameos from Starrett and co-screenwriter Wes Bishop. An interesting sidenote is that Bishop's writing partner, Lee Frost, was the man responsible for many sexploitation flicks from the sixties, including *Mondo Freud*, *Surfside 77* and *The Defilers*.

While *Race With The Devil* does seem to have a minor cult following, it is nowhere near as well regarded as it deserves to be. Hopefully, this review might inspire a few people to track the film down and start spreading the news.

Reviewed by John Harrison

Blue Sunshine

1978m 94 mins, Dir/Scr: Jeff Lieberman, Prod: George Manasse, Photog: Don Knight, Ed: Brian Smedley-Aston, Music: Charles Gross, Cast: Zalman King, Deborah Winters, Mark Goddard, Robert Walden, Alice Ghostley, Brion James.

This off-beat little gem was writer/director Jeff Lieberman's follow-up to his equally memorable 1976 effort *Squirm*. Suffering at the time from poor distribution, *Blue Sunshine* started to gain its good reputation when it surfaced on video in the mid-eighties.

The plot of *Blue Sunshine* is an intriguing one, and could be just as workable in the nineties. A group of students at Stamford University are given an experimental brand of LSD called Blue Sunshine. Ten years later, the delayed effects of the drug causes its users to lose all their hair and become vicious homicidal maniacs. Zalman King (a writer/director/actor with a cult following of his own) is the hero who traces the LSD back to Edward Fleming (former *Lost In Space* star Mark Goddard), a one-time campus drug dealer turned aspiring Congressman. Of course, Fleming will stop at nothing, not even murder, to prevent his shady past

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from threatening his political career.

Just as he did in *Squirm*, Lieberman proves here that he has the talent to overcome the limitations of a low-budget. His extended opening credit sequence, where Charles Gross' evocative music plays as shots of the full moon are intercut with scenes of several characters beginning to feel the effects of the LSD, is wonderfully constructed, and really helps to set the disturbing tone of the movie. Zalman King makes a very solid, seventies-style hero; square jawed, silent and brooding. Mark Goddard is a lot of fun as the slimy politician.

Unfortunately, *Blue Sunshine* does succumb to its era at times, particularly in a scene where one of the maniacs goes on a rampage through a disco, while a track called "Disco Blue" pulsates in the background, a scene which comes across as somewhat campy today. Ironically, "Disco Blue" is performed by a group known as the Humane Society for the Preservation of Good Music(!).

It is somewhat of a shame that Lieberman never got the chance to direct more of his pet projects, as he has a unique and disturbing vision, something which is all too rare in the horror genre.

Reviewed by John Harrison

Guilty Pleasures

(1997, Cinema Image Productions) This second feature (actually, two hour-long movies) by the team of Joe Parda and Joe Zaso far surpasses their first endeavor, *Five Dead on the Crimson Canvas*, in all regards. Although the first tale, *Nocturnal Emissions*, has a lot of nudity by some not so attractive women, it is extremely engaging and downright weird, emphasized by some unexpected blue screen effects. Joe Zaso, as a narcissistic phone stalker, has some of the best and absurd lines. At one point he holds up a greased up phone receiver and says to the woman he's sleeping with, "The phone is not your enemy. It is your friend." He then proceeds to use it as a sexual instrument! The second tale, directed by Zaso, involves a wannabee actress who moves to New York and through her new Method Acting class begins to uncover some of her mysterious past with deadly consequences. Indie B-Movie queen Sasha Graham portrays the confused Rose Marie. If you're looking for something a little different this is one to rent.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Three Ages

(1923) *Three Ages* (with the two-reelers *The Goat* and *My Wife's Relations*) is part of Kino on Video's series "The Art of Buster Keaton," which presents Keaton's independent releases from 1920 to 1927. The unavailability of these films on video has frustrated Keaton buffs for years. This series, which presents often stunning restorations produced by David Shepard and Film Preservation Associates from the best available source materials, is the answer to their prayers.

For over three decades audiences have experienced Keaton's films only from Raymond Rohauer's flat, dupey release prints that washed out many details, often including Keaton's face. Viewing the restored prints is like viewing Michelangelo's restored Sistine Chapel paintings; bright, clear images that haven't been seen for generations are revealed, and in many instances, it is like watching the films for the first time because the improvement is so dramatic.

This video displays the high quality typical of the entire series. Previous video releases of *Three Ages* originated from a badly decomposed source print in which some scenes were nearly illegible. Here, although the main title and credits have been recreated, the use of various source materials has minimized the decomposition so that it rarely intrudes on the viewer. The film can at last be enjoyed without constant visual reminders of its near-oblivion.

Three Ages, released in 1923, was Keaton's first

independent feature production. Its structure was inspired by D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, which also interwove related vignettes set in different historical eras. *Three Ages* portrays the travails of love in the Stone Age, the Roman Age, and the Modern Age. The cast remains the same throughout the ages: Keaton as the lovesick youth; Margaret Leahy as the object of his affections; Lillian Lawrence and Joe Roberts as her Parents; and Wallace Beery as Keaton's rival. Four vignettes are portrayed in each of the ages. First, the girl's parents reject Buster in favor of his rival. Next, Buster tries to arouse the girl's jealousy. Then Buster and his rival engage in a physical contest. Finally, Buster rescues the girl from his rival's unscrupulous clutches. This loose, episodic structure ensured that, should the film fail as a feature, Keaton could edit it into two-reelers with minimal reshooting.



In fact, when compared to Keaton's later, more polished features, *Three Ages* has more of a two-reeler feel about it. The gags are more bizarre—some nearly surreal—than in his later features. For example, in the Roman Age, Buster's rival challenges him to a chariot race. Buster looks at his mismatched team (a saddle horse, a plow horse, a mule, and a jackass) and sighs. Snow is falling, and Buster has a brainstorm—he arrives for the race in a chariot fitted with sled runners and pulled by huskies. When one of the huskies pulls up lame during the race, Buster merely replaces him with a spare dog from a trunk on the back of the chariot!

After Buster wins the chariot race, his rival casts him into a dungeon inhabited by a lion. Buster remembers hearing (a title card tells us) that you can make friends with a lion by "doing something to some of its paws." The would-be Androcles proceeds to give the lion a manicure, soaking its paws in a pan of water and buffing its claws with a bone. The lion surveys his handiwork, then shakes hands with Buster in approval. When Buster is finally rescued, the lion waves a cheery farewell. Buster left this sort of "cartoon gag" behind when he realized that features required a more realistic framework to sustain their length.

In a less outre sequence set in a restaurant, Buster of the Modern Age is depressed because his girl is dining with his rival. In an effort to make his girl jealous, Buster sits at a nearby table next to a seemingly unescorted woman. The woman ignores Buster by opening her handbag and studiously touching up her makeup. Annoyed by this breach of etiquette, Buster appropriates her mirror, lathers his face, and proceeds to shave at the table with a traveler's shaving kit.

For some reason, in *Three Ages*, Jo Roberts, Keaton's perennial heavy in the two-reelers, is relegated to the

character role of the girl's father. (He also plays the girl's father in Keaton's next feature and Roberts' last, *Our Hospitality*.) Wallace Beery is cast as the heavy, perhaps for his name value alone. Beery, a Mack Sennett graduate, had already been featured in a number of comedies by that time. The inept performance of Margaret Leahy as the girl makes fans of Keaton's two-reelers yearn for Sybil Seely or Virginia Fox, either of whom could have brought a little more life to the role. Leahy is even more stone-faced than Keaton.

For all its episodic structure, *Three Ages* is a delight, packed with clever and outrageously funny gags. The future would bring skillfully crafted features that are among the finest comedies ever produced—*Our Hospitality*, *The Navigator*, *The General*, *The Cameraman*—but none would recapture the sheer lighthearted fun of *Three Ages*.

In *The Goat*, one of Keaton's best two-reelers, Buster's photograph is mistakenly printed in newspapers, on wanted posters, and on billboards as that of an escaped murderer Dead Shot Dan. In an unforgettable "delayed" gag, Buster tricks a bunch of pursuing policemen into a moving van, then locks them inside and flees. After several intervening sequences, a van pulls up in front of Buster and dumps a load of angry cops at his feet.

In another scene, Buster, trapped in a locked room with a murderous enemy, makes a breathtaking escape. He leaps over a table, onto his enemy's shoulders, and through a transom over the door.

My Wife's Relations, another two-reeler, rounds out the videotape. This is one of Keaton's rare clunkers, a run-of-the-mill, uninspired film. In it, a heavyset bruiser of a woman hauls Buster into court to sue him. They appear before a Polish-speaking judge who misunderstands the situation and marries them. At home, the bride's father and brothers rough up Buster, declaring, "He'll never last a week in this family." Had this film not been made by Keaton, it would have been forgotten, and rightfully so. The other two films on this video are the true indicators of Keaton's high standard of quality.

This is also available in a \$79.95 boxed set with *The Saphead* (with *One Week* and *The High Sign*) and *Our Hospitality* (with *Sherlock Jr.*). This video, or any of Kino's "Art of Buster Keaton" series, is a must-have for any who enjoy Keaton's comedy, and especially for those who haven't yet seen how beautifully these films have been restored. Thanks to these stunning restorations, Keaton's classics look less like ancient relics and more like what they are, timeless comedy masterpieces.

Reviewed by Jan MacGilvray

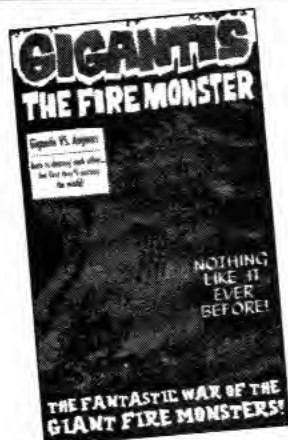
Habitat

(1997, A-Pix) In the near future, where there is no longer an ozone layer and much of the world is a burned out husk, a scientist (Tcheky Karyo) comes up with a way to "give mother nature a kick in the butt" so that humanity will survive. His unorthodox experiments, however, have the government searching for him and his family (Alice Krige, Balthazar Getty). This is because he has discovered a way to speed up evolution and literally overnight create an entirely unique ecosystem within the confines of his house. But experiments go awry and he becomes contaminated, becoming a part of the house, sporadically appearing like a ghost to talk to his wife and son, who soon begin changing as well. This movie, while at times original and fascinating is nevertheless interrupted by some extremely irritating clichés, primarily when the characters are in the "outside" world. In these sequences Getty is provoked by the high school bully, tormented by the overly macho physical ed teacher, and falls in love with the cute blonde girl, who also happens to be the phys ed teacher's daughter! Stereotypes aside, this is one of the most interesting direct-to-video sci-fi

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Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Urban Legend

(1996, SFM Video, directed by Wayne Harold) A young married couple, while on vacation, cross paths with some ruthless killers who are on the run. Although the movie starts with a lot of promise (a tense standoff between two groups of bad guys, and also some decent pyrotechnics) it soon degenerates to murky camera shots and clichéd acting by Ohio's finest. The movie's "hero" looks like an overweight high-school senior, complete with varsity jacket, while his wife (Arianna Albright) looks remarkably like a female Pee-wee Herman. Note to new directors: when casting your female lead have at least one of the following—good looks, good body, and good acting ability.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Teenagers Battle The Thing

Thanks to the advent of home video, hundreds of long-forgotten movies are getting a second lease on life. In many instances, these films received scant (if any) distribution when they were new, and their existence often comes as a great surprise to film buffs. *Teenagers Battle the Thing* is one such example. This low-budget horror tale played in (very) limited release on the midnight drive-in theater circuit from 1958 to 1961; then the negative wound up in a vault at Hollywood's Consolidated Film Industries, and the memory of the movie faded in the minds of the few who saw it.

Hugh Thomas, the supervising producer of this film was also responsible for funding Ed Wood's now-legendary *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. (Thomas even had a one-line speaking role in the film.) The manner in which Thomas became involved in the industry would make an interesting movie in itself: During the early

1950s, he owned a successful drive-in theater in Sarasota, Florida. Geologists discovered oil on the adjoining land; the theater was torn down, oil derricks went up, and Thomas moved to Beverly Hills to pursue a career as a motion picture producer.

However, after a brief stint in Hollywood, he returned to film exhibition, operating the Grove Theater in Upland, California. That's when an aspiring writer-director named Don Fields approached Thomas about collaborating on an independent production, resulting in *Teenagers Battle the Thing*. The simple plot of this 60-minute thriller concerns a group of high school students on a field expedition. The kids and their teacher uncover a mummy from an ancient Indian campsite; the "thing" revives and runs amuck, hence the film's title.

Ironically, though it's tempting to herald it as another *Plan 9*, *Teenagers Battle the Thing* is better than you'd imagine, given the circumstances. It doesn't start promisingly: the first few minutes are pretty bleak, with lots of claustrophobic, silent footage and non-stop narration. But when the action shifts outdoors, the film becomes a little more ambitious, technically speaking, with some surprisingly assured camerawork.

While the cast consists of unknown amateurs, the actors manage to deliver the dialogue without embarrassing themselves to any great extent. At least there's none of the awkward pauses and verbal stumbling you'd find in other, higher-bracketed cheapies.

On the other hand, the film lacks the kind of outrageous gaffes that makes *Plan 9* (and others of this ilk) a cult item. Viewers expecting to discover a "lost" camp classic may be surprised (or disappointed) to find that *Teenagers Battle the Thing* is a modest, efficiently made little picture that compares favorably to many of the movies American-International was distributing at the time. It's now available on video from Monument Entertainment/Program Power Entertainment.)

Reviewed by Ted Okuda

Frostbiter

(1997, Troma Team Release, directed by Tom Chaney) This Michigan lensed horror film owes a great deal to Raimi's *Evil Dead* movies, as it basically follows the same story. An evil spirit is released in the woods, this time a Wendigo—a Native American Evil Spirit—which goes about killing all the humans in the area by transforming into different entities—carnivorous little monsters, a playboy centerfold turned into an old witch and even killer chillies! Although it's another "survive in the cabin for a night" movie, this one has enough low-budget energy, quirky characters and old fashioned effects to satisfy the ardent horror fan. It's familiar territory revisited in a good way.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Mark of Dracula

(1998, Wildcat) There's something amiss in the town of Shepperton... could it be the cloning of Dracula? Lucy Westenra, having survived the past one hundred years, has kept the still bloodied stake that killed her master in hopes of one day resurrecting him. This becomes possible through cloning. Once the king of the vampires is brought back to life he has that same scientist try to cure his aversion to sunlight, experimenting on victims he has turned into the undead.

These experiments fail and they burn to a crisp, realized by some convincing special effects. Two couples, camping in the nearby hills, stumble upon the scientist's house and are drawn into the vampiric vortex. Will Dracula take a new bride? Will he be able to walk into the sunlight once more? How many of the people of Shepperton will die? Ron Ford (director of *Alien Force*) treats his subject matter with respect and you can tell those Hammer films had some influence. This is a worthy installment of the Dracula saga.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth
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 Destroy All Monsters G \$125
 Dracula Vs Frankenstein (style B) G+ \$50
 Jungle Raiders, serial reissue 1953 VG \$35
 Jungle Woman G (some splitting in crease) \$200
 King Of Jungle Land (1949 reissue of Darkest Africa serial) G+ \$50
 King Of The Wild, Karloff serial (stone litho) VG \$400
 The Mummy's Shroud VG \$50
 Rocketship XM \$500
 The Tinger VG \$100
 White Zombie 1938 reissue VG+ Linen \$1000

22x28:

Abbott And Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde style A VG \$200
 Abbott & Costello Meet The Invisible Man G pinholes \$175
 The Amazing Colossal Man VG+ \$250
 The Bat VG \$60
 Battle In Outer space style A G \$50
 Beyond The Time Barrier G \$60
 The Brain Eaters G+ folded \$150
 The Bride And The Beast (folded) G \$100
 Curucu, Beast Of The Amazon style B G+ \$100
 Dracula Realart 1951 reissue VG Linen \$1250
 Dr. Cyclops G folded \$350
 Invaders From Mars VG+ \$600
 The Mole People, rare style B G+ \$500

14x36 (inserts):

Abbott & Costello Go To Mars G \$150
 The Creature Walks Among Us NM \$650
 Mesa Of Lost Women G \$150
 The Mole People NM \$250
 The Monolith Monsters VG+ \$100
 Monster From The Ocean Floor NM \$200

Window Cards:

Batman (1966) NM: \$125
 Fistful Of Dollars VG: \$125
 Journey To The Far Side Of The Sun VG: \$20
 King Kong Escapes VG \$45
 Man From Uncle, One Spy too Many: VG: \$30
 Revenge Of The Creature VG \$400

Belgian Posters:

Arabian Nights Maria Montez G \$50
 Atlantis The Lost Continent VG \$20
 Clockwork Orange G \$20
 Godzilla 1980 ? NM \$30
 Gorgo NM \$50
 Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte VG \$40
 It Came From Outer Space G \$50

Belgian posters (continued)

The Phantom Of The Opera Claude Rains G- \$100
 The Red Dragon Charlie Chan F+ \$30
 Tarzan's Desert Mystery G \$50
 This Island Earth G \$75
 Voodoo Man Lugosi, VG \$150

Lobby Cards:

Black Friday Title card NM.... \$1,200
 Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman . Monster carrying I. Massey, G, \$650
 Ghost Of Frankenstein Graveyard scene VG \$1,200
 London After Midnight orig scene card w/Lon Chaney as detective
 Vampire in border only VG \$1,000
 Man Made Monster close up of Chaney and Atwill VG \$750
 Mark Of The Vampire rare Lugosi scene card (he only appears on two in the entire set) borders restored but otherwise VG \$4,500
 The Mummy's Ghost scene card w/ Chaney and Carradine G \$600
 Plan 9 From Outer Space scene w/Tor Johnson and Vampira G \$250
 The Scarlet Claw, Sherlock Holmes scene w/Rathbone and Bruce G+ \$250
 The Wolfman (1941) Best scene w/E. Ankers and wolfman VG+ \$4,000

Banners (24x81):

King Kong, 1952 reissue, F, \$250
 Son of Frankenstein 1953 reissue, VG, \$350
 Two Lost Worlds VG, \$125

Three Stooges Posters:

Columbia Laugh Hour Stooges and others stock sheet \$300
 For Crimin' Out Loud Shemp VG \$300
 Have Rocket Will Travel 14x36 VG \$100
 Husbands Beware Shemp VG \$300
 Idle Roomers Curly scene card NM best scene \$1000
 No Census No Feeling Curly VG linen \$5,500
 Pardon By Backfire 2D one sheet \$650
 Rumpus In The Harem Shemp VG \$300
 Three Dark Horses Shemp VG \$650
 Three Stooges Fun A Rama Joe Besser VG+ \$250
 Three Stooges In Orbit title card VG \$50
 Three Stooges Go Around The World In A Daze VG \$125
 Three Stooges Meet Hercules VG \$125
 Time Out For Rhythm Curly color scene card with Ann Miller and the Stooges VG+ \$500

Classic Movies misc. posters:

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 The Bullfighters Laurel & Hardy one sheet G+ \$250
 The Great Dictator orig one sheet Chaplin VG \$1,500
 Iron Man ultra rare Jean Harlow Tod Browning lobby card 1931 VG+ one of a kind \$750
 It Happened One Night 1934 22x28 G+ \$5,000
 Lloyds Of London 1936 one sheet VG+ linen \$1,000
 Monkey Business 1931 Marx Bros. Window card VG \$1,500
 San Francisco 1948 reissue one sheet VG linen \$300
 Saratoga 14x36 Jean Harlow original G \$900
 Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs 14x36 1937 VG+ linen \$7,500
 Snow White orig. title card NM \$750

Condition: NM=near mint, VG=very good, G=good, F=fair

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Island Claws

(1980, released by Vestron in 1985) On a generic tropical island where vacationers bathe in the sun, Marine biologists are experimenting with growth hormones on the local crabs. Not a good combination. There's lots of preaching about how mankind is screwing up the ecosystems, the usual sub-plots with characters you really don't care about, and of course, the crabs. Although normal sized at first, they wholeheartedly attack a fisherman who lives alone in his trailer, crawling up the walls (albeit slowly), pouring in through the open windows (even more slowly) and eventually causing the entire trailer to go up in flames. Later, evidence is found of a much larger creature — mostly trails in the beach sand and shed pieces of its giant shell about the island. When the giant creature is finally revealed it is impressive — a giant crab constructed by Glen Robinson, who did some of the effects on the '77 version of *King Kong*. Robert Lansing, one of the island's fishermen, defeats the crab by poking out its eye stalks.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Humanoids From The Deep

(1997, New Horizons) This sequel/remake to the Roger Corman classic seems more a remake of *Attack of the Giant Leeches*, with the humanoids kidnapping women and taking them to their underwater lair, but instead of sucking their blood they intend to reproduce. The premise here is that scientists have genetically altered the DNA of serial killers with fish DNA in hopes of creating the ultimate soldier (of course!) and the creatures escape. This is all told through dialogue. Scientist Emma Samms, feeling guilty about all this, goes to the fishing town where the carnage ensues and befriends fish factory worker Robert Carradine. Carradine's daughter is subsequently kidnapped by the fish-baby. Although a needless retread, this movie is far better than you'd think it would be keeping in mind remakes of *Wasp Woman* and *Piranha*.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Necro Files

(1997) Another Matt Jaissle (*Legion of the Night*) directed fiasco, this film looks slightly more competent than the shot on Super 8mm *Back From Hell* (Home Video 1997) but comes off like a desperate attempt to

cash in on the *X-File*'s popularity while throwing in as much needless gore as possible. Perhaps they were trying to cover up in blood what they couldn't accomplish with the movie.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Mirror Mirror 3

This sequel in name only concerns a brooding artist (Billy Drago) who discovers the title's mirror in an old mansion and becomes obsessed by the presence of his dead lover who haunts his dreams, or so the synopsis on the back of the box cover says. Trying to gather this information from the movie itself is another matter. Although there's the obligatory nudity by the "ghost" it's so unerotic and boring that your finger is compelled to push that fast-forward button. Billy Drago, normally cast as a villain, simply fails to be sympathetic as the tormented man. In fact, you wish he'd die sooner so the movie would be over. Perhaps he's in the movie because he co-produced it...

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

Commercial Vision 3 and Best of Animation Commercials

(TV Lost & Found) If you're an American male who reached puberty during the 1960s, the name Joey Heatherton will trigger a flood of TV-watching memories. Although unfairly dismissed as a pale imitation of Ann-Margaret, Heatherton effortlessly projected the same raw sexuality. With her pouty, kittenish, girl/woman charms, it comes as no surprise to learn that Joey was a leading contender for the title role in *Lolita* (1962).

Though she wasn't exactly a "performance artist," Joey was versatile: a good singer, a sensational dancer, and, with the right material, a competent actress (she was better at comedy than drama). On countless variety shows throughout the 1960s and '70s, she became a familiar, er, FACE on television, wearing astoundingly skimpy outfits that somehow managed to get past media's censorship code of the era. And as far as I'm concerned, one Joey Heatherton is worth more than a busload of Spice Girls.

During the '70s, Joey was hired as a commercial spokeswoman for the Serta Mattress Company, resulting in an ideal union of celebrity and product. The highlight of TV Lost & Found's new video, *Commercial*

Vision Vol. 3 is easily Serta's "Behind the scenes with Joey Heatherton," an eight-and-a-half minute commercial. With the solemnity of a NASA documentary, we're shown the rehearsals, technical set-ups, photo sessions, and other production particulars, as Heatherton is put through her paces. The narrator observes, "This is a new Joey... she's more contemplative... feeling the music, sensing the mood..." Yeah, whatever.

This promo includes two completed commercials, in which Heatherton breathily assures us that Serta's Perfect Sleeper Mattress "gives you firmness and comfort, the perfect combination." Who am I to contradict an expert in the field?

The one-hour *Commercial Vision Vol 3* also contains spots for other products, and it's fun to find a few then-unknown actors at the early stages of their careers. Marcia Strassman (*Honey, I Shrunk The Kids*) and Tony Roberts (*Annie Hall*), both looking younger than Springtime, turn up in a commercial for Respond Hair Spray. Vic Tayback (*Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*) is an Average Joe who uses Schick Razor Blades. James Hong (*Chinatown*) is a proud father whose daughter brushes with Crest Toothpaste. The biggest surprise is a glimpse of a youthful Phil Jackson, now the coach of the Chicago Bulls, endorsing Man Power Deodorant. (Well, we can't all "Be Like Mike" and land a big, fat contract with Nike.)

While *Commercial Vision* doesn't have the uniformity or focus of other TV commercial volumes, the Heatherton/Serta sequence is reason enough for me to recommend this video to all male Baby Boomers with a warm spot in their hearts for Joey, who's still one of my favorite blonde bombshells.

Memories of another kind are sparked by the same company's *Best of Animation Commercials*, an enjoyable 90-minute collection of ad spots with cartoon characters serving as pitchmen, pitchwomen, and pitchTHINGS. You don't quite realize what's filed away in the deep, dark recesses of your mind until you watch a commercial that you haven't seen in decades, such as the one for Ipana Toothpaste with Bucky Beaver, and to your amazement (and horror), find yourself remembering its jingle, word for word: "Brush-a, brush-a, brush-a/With the new Ipana..." Be afraid - be very afraid.

Among the animation all-stars on view are Rocky and Bullwinkle hawking breakfast cereals (Cheerios, Cocoa Puffs, Trix), Woody Woodpecker hyping Kellogg's Rice Krispies, and Mr. Magoo for, of all things, Stag Beer! Then again, who makes a more credible brew endorser—a nearsighted senior citizen or a bunch of croaking frogs?


The Flintstones gang is on hand to promote Welch's Grape Juice; no surprise there, but the Bedrockians also pop up in commercials for Winston Cigarettes! And the pack that Barney Rubble carries around with him is about the size of a Shetland pony! Now we know what killed the dinosaurs: second-hand smoke.

Several commercials feature cartoon characters that were strictly product trademarks. Along with the aforementioned Bucky Beaver, there's Sugar Pops Pete (for Sugar Pops Cereal), The Campbell Kids (Campbell's Soup), Dino the Dinosaur (Sinclair Gasoline), and extra-terrestrials Quisp and Quake - each of whom had separate breakfast cereals named after them. The Funny Face Drink Mix line offered a variety of flavor/characters with names like Goofy Grape, Rootin' Tootin' Raspberry, Loud Mouth Lime, and Freckle-Faced Strawberry. But Chinese Cherry and Injun Orange were quickly replaced with the less racially-inspired Choo Choo Cherry and Jolly Olly Orange. I guess Muslim Melon and Ku Klux Cranberry never got past the drawing board.

Fortunately, characters like The Waffle Wiffer (Aunt Jemima Waffles) and King Ding Dong (Hostess Ding Dongs) appeared solely in commercials. Nonetheless, here's a concept I hope Hollywood never considers: Mr. Bubble, The Movie

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Both video collections, Commercial Vision Vol. 3, as well as Best Of Animation Commercials, are available for \$20.00 each (plus \$5.00 s&h) from TV Lost And Found, P.O. Box 489, Schererville, IN 46375)

Reviewed by Ted Okuda

Afros, Macks & Zodiacs

(Something Weird) If there's one genre that deserves the label of "guilty pleasure," it's Blaxploitation Cinema. The 1970s produced an incredible number of black-oriented exploitation movies, and this lively 90-minute compilation of Coming Attractions trailers serves as a reminder as to just how entertaining this short-lived but prolific genre really was.

Hosted by Rudy Ray Moore, star of such blaxploitation fare as *Dolemite*, *The Human Tornado*, *Disco Godfather*, and *Monkey Hustle*, and the self-proclaimed "motherf*cker who handcuffed lightning and put thunder's ass in jail," Afros, Macks & Zodiacs presents one trailer after another, interspersed with (extremely) salty commentary from Moore.

While all film genres are open to examination and discussion, this collection doesn't take any historical stance, nor does it need to. It simply allows the trailers to document the unpretentious time capsule material in a manner that will gladden the hearts of many exploitation aficionados. (And you know who you are, Mr. Tarantino.)

There was certainly no shortage of '70s Blaxploitation movies, and this volume showcases an amazing selection of titles, such as *The Mack*, *Foxy Brown*, *Super Dude*, *Cool Breeze*, *Book of Numbers*, *Sheba Baby*, *Trick Baby*, *Cleopatra Jones*, *That Man Bolt*, *Black Belt Jones*, *Black Mama-White Mama*, and *Black Caesar*.

Watching the trailer to a movie is often more entertaining than watching the movie itself, and this is especially true of the blaxploitation trailers. The hype—or more specifically, the hyperbole—is astounding: consider *Dr. Black and Mr. Hyde* ("Don't give him no sass or he'll kick your ass!"), *Foxy Brown* ("A chick with drive who don't take no jive!"), *Superfly* ("He's got a plan to stick it to The Man!"), and *Ebony*, *Ivory & Jade* ("You're better off dead when they start blasting lead!"). They don't write ad copy like they used to.

Though it's fashionable for critics to summarily dismiss the entire genre (and, to be fair, some of these films are pretty indefensible), this collection also includes above-average titles: *Cotton Comes To Harlem*, *Blacula*, *Soul To Soul*, *Wattstax*, and *Let's Do It Again*.

This is not meant to denigrate the other movies, and especially, the resourceful performers who appeared in them. The majority of blaxploitation pictures were personality-driven, and personalities like Fred Williamson, Ron O'Neal, Tamara Dobson, Jim Kelly, Antonio Fargas, Freda Payne, and the great Pam Grier used their talents to fight, and conquer, cardboard storylines and undernourished budgets.

This video collection gives a new dimension to the expression "a blast from the past" and belongs in every exploitation junkie's video collection. Or, as Rudy Ray Moore would put it, "If you crave satisfaction, dig this black action!" It's available from Something Weird Video, PO Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133. Phone (206)361-3759.

Reviewed by Ted Okuda

Spooks Run Wild

(1941) Dir. by Phil Rosen. With Bela Lugosi, the East Side Kids, Dave O'Brien, Dorothy Short, Angelo Rossitto.

Watching *Spooks Run Wild* is like observing a potentially disastrous chemistry experiment, as two volatile elements are combined for the first time. The individual ingredients—Bela Lugosi and The East Side Kids—were successful in full-strength doses, and producer Sam Katzman saw the box-office possibilities

of pitting the rambunctious roughnecks against the monstrous menace. The results were successfully unveiled during Halloween week of 1941.

Technically *Spooks Run Wild* is a Lugosi picture; Bela's name is above the title, and the "East Side Kids" tag isn't even used on the screen. Carl Foreman and Charles R. Marion are credited with the screenplay; Marion became a prolific comedy writer while Foreman went on to such important films as *High Noon* and *The Bridge On The River Kwai*. But in '41 the young writers were laboring on the assembly line at Monogram Pictures. The melodramatic script is more concerned with thrills than laughs. A small New England town is terrorized by the nocturnal prowling of a notorious killer who preys upon young women. The East Side Kids are bound for the same town, joining a summer camp for juvenile delinquents. Playing truant from camp at night, they encounter an old house and run afoul of the imposing "horror man."



Gagman Jack Henley contributed some obvious jokes to lighten the script. (Sample: "How can you read in the dark?"/ "I went to night school.") The writers were wasting their time on thoughtfully crafted dialogue, because for the most part The East Side Kids threw the script away and made things up as they went along. In later years Ernie "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison, who played the black kid "Scruno," recalled that he would huddle with the other gang members before each take, and they would plan their routines.

Spooks Run Wild wanders from one scene to another, and so do the East Side Kids. The director was the competent but uninspired Phil Rosen, and his lack of discipline is obvious. Rosen probably said "Go ahead, boys," and turned away while the camera recorded the kids' boisterous antics. Sometimes the ad-libs work, sometimes they barely register, and sometimes they're unintelligible. But for better or worse, "Muggs" (Leo Gorcey), "Glimpy" (Huntz Hall) and company never stop talking. A typical improvisation follows a bus driver getting a face full of exhaust soot: Muggs yells, "Hey, it's Scruno's uncle!" Then Scruno greets the "darkey" with an exuberant "Hi, Unc!"

Rosen had better luck with the more professional Bela Lugosi. Unlike the kids' chaotic footage, which barely keeps them in frame, the Lugosi sequences are more carefully composed. (Lugosi would at least hold still.) The erstwhile Dracula, arriving in town with a sinister-looking dwarf and a truckload of coffins, merely

has to say "Good evening, my friend" - and that's all it takes to thoroughly unnerve one of the locals. Lugosi was always being saddled with variations of his philosophical "children of the night" prose from *Dracula*, and he goes through the motions here. Happening upon a graveyard, Lugosi muses, "The city of the dead! Do they too hear the howling of the frightened dogs? Heh-heh-heh-heh!" It's ponderous, but somehow it sounds better when Bela Lugosi says it.

The script makes it clear that Lugosi is up to no good, and the actor obligingly plays "The Heavy" in the film's thrill sequences. His eyes light up as he advances upon a helpless, wounded victim. As the camera creeps forward, Lugosi rapturously beholds the body, his mouth agape. Throughout the movie, each time the fiendish Lugosi approaches a moment of truth, film editor Robert Golden shrewdly cuts away to something else.

In other scenes one can see that the stage-trained Lugosi enjoyed working in comedies, even the lowbrow ones. He good-naturedly plays the straightman to the comic rowdies. Ushering Bobby Jordan and Leo Gorcey into a dank, cobweb-infested chamber, Bela helpfully says, "I understand this room was occupied by the late owner of this house at the time of his DEATH! I hope this knowledge will not disturb your sleep." Lugosi's character seems to amuse by his guests' discomfort; taking his leave of the skittish delinquents, he tenderly croons "Good NIIIGHT!"

This film tries to convey a creepy atmosphere. More interesting, however, is what the filmmakers didn't want the viewer to notice. Sam Katzman's one-take, get-what-you-can technique is obvious. A weak school bell passes for an institutional alarm signal. A truck, pressed into action, wearily groans and coughs. When hero Dave O'Brien hears an agonized scream, he immediately recognizes his girlfriend's voice. When a scene takes place late at night, two consecutive shots are photographed in bright sunlight. When someone strikes a match, it illuminates an entire room. It's so dark that Huntz Hall has to run for candles, but he casts a large shadow on the wall behind him. We aren't supposed to care about these glitches. After all, Sam Katzman and Phil Rosen didn't.

Bela Lugosi somehow keeps his dignity in *Spooks Run Wild*, while The East Side Kids make their presence known. Bobby Jordan, the best actor of the troupe, was originally top-billed in the series but was soon crowded out of the spotlight by the bombastic Leo Gorcey and the anic Huntz Hall. Hall, who had just joined the series and thus gets featured billing, furnishes some crazy ad-libs including a funny impersonation of Lugosi in the last reel.

Fans of the former Dead End Kids (and future Bowery Boys) will enjoy watching The East Side Kids at their most relaxed, bulling their way through the movie. Admirers of Bela Lugosi will enjoy the magic of his theatrical voice enhancing his undemanding role. And students of the Monogram corpus will enjoy the familiar faces, low-budget production, and poverty-row hit parade of canned mood music. It isn't prime Lugosi, prime East Side Kids, or even prime Monogram. But for B-movie buffs, it's triple-barreled fun just the same.

Reviewed by Scott MacGillivray

Sentinel, 2099

(1995, Jupiter Entertainment) In the late 20th century a plague decimated most of humanity. In the early 21st century a race of blue skinned aliens called the Zisk arrive, offering a cure for the disease. As it turns out they aren't really benefactors but invaders. Although obviously done on a low budget it's an extremely ambitious film with lots of miniatures and explosions and most of the forced perspective shots work quite well.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

(continued)

COMING SOON

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will be published in the Autumn of 98

Sex and Buttered Popcorn

(1989) *Sex and Buttered Popcorn* is a tribute to the vanishing breed of "roadshowmen"—the itinerant film peddlers "who collected the wages of sin." Their carnival-style promotions enticed respectable citizens to spend their money on "adults-only" entertainment. Film distributor Kit Parker co-produced this documentary, but it's filmmaker Sam Harrison's baby. Harrison wrote, produced, directed, and edited the program itself. Harrison obviously knows his subject, and reaches into the vaults for dozens of rare highlights, showing anti-drug films, parental-neglect stories, sex-education seminars, true-crime expose's, and nudist films. Very few of these films are identified, and none of the actors or actresses are named, which is frustrating. A list of the film titles appears during the end credits, but it's up to you to recall which scene belonged to which movie.

The editing by Harrison is pointed, digging the funniest and most embarrassing nuggets out of the full-length features. A few of the clips flash by too quickly to register, but the tongue-in-cheek points are made. The terrible acting and junkyard production values are on full display. In one typical scene a young woman, visiting her neighbor on a summer's day, exclaims "Gee, it's hot!" and climbs out of her dress while chatting with her girlfriend.

Harrison's outstanding editorial achievement is a montage of clips from *Escort Girl* (1941), cutting from the "mainstream" version to the "uncensored" version and back again. The actresses are fully gowned in the first version, and not quite dressed in the second. Harrison reconstructs a dialogue scene from both prints, which match precisely. The actresses' deliveries are the same, even their positions and poses are the same, but thanks to Harrison their clothes suddenly appear and disappear throughout the scene. It's as if movie-magician George Melies had playfully made a sexy film.

Many of these exploitation films are known by more than one title. This was merely good business, because the same piece of merchandise could be sold over and over again. Veteran roadshowmen David F. Friedman and Dan Sonney, interviewed on-screen, describe how a provocative title would improve a tame film. Their commentary is illustrated by appropriate visuals.

Friedman and Sonney provide the best parts of this video, as they good-naturedly tease each other about their colorful careers. Sonney and Friedman have no illusions about their business, and they clue you in about the tricks of the trade.

They respectfully pay tribute to master entrepreneur Kroger Babb, who made millions of dollars with his ballyhoo of such films as *Mom and Dad* (1944), a frank examination of sex education. Babb's widow, Mildred, fondly recalls her husband's humorous nature and his kindly if extravagant ways.

One of Babb's gimmicks is discussed in detail. During the showings of *Mom and Dad*, the distinguished "hygiene commentator Mr. Elliot Forbes" lectured theater crowds in person, while the film reels were being changed. At this point Forbes, crusading for the sake of education, would sell sex manuals at a dollar a throw. The video shows a quick photo of about 20 guys lined up in formation, all of whom played the part of "Elliot Forbes" for Mr. Babb's touring company.

The highlight of the entire tape is David Friedman's affectionate, word-for-word recital of the sales pitch used during a typical intermission. Friedman never misses a beat as phony sincerity overtakes his speech, and his eyes positively glow when he's about to fleece the flock.

Sex and Buttered Popcorn could have used more of this informal, enjoyable material, but the documentary is mostly a clipfest. The 50-year-old films are in surprisingly good condition, free of scratches and splices. Your enjoyment will depend on how much you can stand in one sitting; the approach of these offbeat pictures ranges from clinical to sordid, but the overall gamey effect is the same. Like a bloopers marathon, the

novelty soon wears off, and you might become jaded while watching so many clips for over an hour.

What could have been a tight half-hour or hour-long documentary weighs in at a flabby hour and a quarter. At about the 60-minute mark, just when it appears that host-narrator Ned Beatty is wrapping up the topic with a summary, he begins a new introduction, setting up another 15 minutes of clips to illustrate points that have already been made.

Sam Harrison is no fool; he uses the same exploitation techniques as his heroes. Early on, showman Dan Sonney uses some blue language which is humorously bleeped; the video puts this clip on first as a teaser. In the old days, a short reel of cheesecake was often spliced onto the end of a reel, in case any audience members felt shortchanged; following tradition, Harrison hauls out one of these pinup shorts at the very end of his show. The age-old custom of spicing up the title even applies to this video: *Sex and Buttered Popcorn* is an interesting but hardly comprehensive title.

The exploitation field created a lot of obscure and bizarre film, and Harrison shows off a lot of it, but watching this video is like visiting an exotic, specialized museum. If you could spend all day reveling in this genre, you'll enjoy every minute of the tape. For others, it's too long a tour. You be the judge.

From Kit Parker Films, at \$29.95 in the SP mode, and \$9.95 for the EP mode.

Reviewed by Ted Okuda.



Journey To The Beginning of Time

(1955/60) One of my fondest TV-watching memories is the serialized adventures of four boys who go boating down a mysterious river and wind up traveling back in time, encountering all sorts of prehistoric beasts along the way. It wasn't until years later that I learned this intriguing chapterplay, titled *Journey To The Beginning of Time*, was actually a feature film that had been segmented for television consumption.

Having disappeared from view in recent years, the feature version is now available again, thanks to Goodtimes Home Video. Although recorded in the LP mode, the print used for the video transfer is crisp and colorful, offering a good look at a childhood favorite that holds up amazingly well.

A youthful foursome—Doc (James Lucas), Jo-Jo (Victor Betral), Tony (Peter Hermann), and Ben (Charles Goldsmith)—visit the American Museum of Natural History in New York, spending most of their time looking at the giant dinosaur skeletons in the museum's Jurassic Hall. Before leaving, they stop and gaze at a statue of an ancient Indian medicine man.

Afterwards, the boys go rowing in Central Park. They enter a forboding cave and emerge, on the other side, on a great river; there's been a drastic drop in the temperature and they're surrounded by huge ice blocks. They're also taken aback when they encounter a woolly mammoth and other Ice Age creatures.

Continuing down the river—and periodically going ashore to examine the strange surroundings—they soon realize that they're journeying back through time. Doc, whose knowledge of paleontology allows him to offer a running commentary, keeps a diary of their incredible voyage.

They travel through various eras—Cenozoic, Mesozoic, Paleozoic, and so forth. During the Jurassic Pe-

riod of the Mesozoic Era, the boys get a close look at a Brontosaurus, are attacked by a Pterodactyl, and witness a fight-to-the-death between a Stegosaurus and a Ceratosaurus.

Their journey eventually takes them back to the very dawn of Creation. Having reached the end (or, rather, the Beginning), they suddenly "awake" back at the museum, in front of the Indian statue. It was all a dream. But wait! Doc's brand-new diary is now tattered and waterstained, just as it became during their trip. Hmm...

The film was directed by Karel Zeman, a Czechoslovakian filmmaker whose work is distinguished by imaginative and brilliant visuals. Like the earlier work of French "cinema magician" George Melies (*A Trip To The Moon*), Zeman's movies skillfully combined live action with animation, puppetry, and models. Zeman's most acclaimed production—justifiably so—is the beautifully conceived and executed Vynalez Zkazy (*An Invention of Destruction*, 1958), which saw release in the United States as *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne* in 1961. His other films include *Baron Prasil* (1961; U.S. title: *The Fabulous Baron Munchausen*), *Blaznova Kronika* (*A Jester's Tale*, 1964), *Ukradena Vzducholod* (1966; U.S. title: *A Stolen Airship*), and *Na Komete* (aka *Archa Pana Servadaca*, 1970; U.S. video title: *On The Comet*).

Zeman was a former poster designer who turned to film directing after World War II. Starting with short movies, he graduated to features with *Poklad Ptachio Ostrova* (*The Treasure of Bird Island*) in 1952. *Journey to the Beginning of Time* is the Americanized version of *Cesta Do Praveku* (*Voyage to Prehistory*, 1955), Zeman's second feature. William Cayton, an American producer, secured the U.S. distribution rights to the film in the late '50s. Cayton added new opening scenes involving the American Museum of Natural History and Central Park (utilizing obvious doubles for the four leads), in an effort to make the production seem less "foreign." (Cayton also Anglicized the names of the young actors in the opening credits. James Lukas was rechristened "James Lucas," Vladimir Bejval became "Victor Betral," Petr Herrman was now "Peter Hermann," and Zdenek Hustak became... "CHARLES GOLDSMITH!")

In 1960, a company called Radio and Television Packagers marketed two versions of *Journey*: as a straight feature-length picture, and in a serialized form (each installment running approximately five minutes in length) designed for daily television airings. It is this serial version that many Baby Boomers remember best. With a narrator breathlessly intoning, "You WON'T want to miss the next exciting chapter..." at the conclusion of each segment, mesmerized children were at the edge of their seats waiting for the next days' continuation.

After the serialized *Journey* disappeared from TV, the feature version was released theatrically in 1966 (by New Trends Associates), perhaps to capitalize on the success of Hammer Films' *One Million Years B.C.* (1965). During the '70s, the feature again turned up as Saturday matinee kiddie fare.

Even in this age of state-of-the-art technology and computer animation, this film remains an impressive and ambitious undertaking. The stop-motion animation of the various prehistoric beasts may seem static by today's standards, but the designs of the beautifully-crafted models and puppets are often breathtaking.

For a scene in which the boys investigate the aftermath of a dinosaur battle, Zeman had a full-size Stegosaurus model constructed, when Jo-Jo climbs on top of the dead creature, the effect is eye-popping. (Contrary to previously published accounts, this is a full-sized model, not an optically-enlarged puppet.)

Journey is by no means a perfect movie. The leisurely pace becomes a bit too poky in spots, as viewers (especially younger ones) wait patiently for the next beast to appear. And the English-dubbing in this U.S. release print is often sloppy; there are scenes where the voices on the soundtrack are busy jabbering away

while the mouths of their onscreen counterparts are tightly shut. (Wisely, much of Doc's dialogue is stream-of-consciousness voice-over narration.)

Goodtimes issued this film to capitalize on the video release of Jurassic Park; the artwork on the Goodtimes video case even features a Tyrannosaurus Rex (in place of the Ceratosaurus) drawn to look pretty much like the T-Rex in the Spielberg production.

While it lacks Jurassic Park's astonishing technical polish, *Journey to the Beginning of Time* offers more in the way of educational value and pure imagination. Its reappearance allows me to take my own journey back through time.

Reviewed by Ted Okuda

Ghost In The Shell

This is the first Japanimation title ever to reach the peak of Billboard's Top Video Sales chart. In 1996 it became the leading Japanese animation film worldwide selling over a quarter of a million videos in the U.S. alone. It was also the first Japanese animated movie to take on Western partners - Bandai Visual and Kodansha. The dubbed version is available through Manga Entertainment for \$19.95 or subtitled at \$29.95. Toll free number for ordering is (800)428-4434.

Ghost in the Shell tells the story of a life form that evolves from the Internet seeking asylum from a cybernetic human ghost. Set in an internationalized Japan, this is a world where the value of life is cheap compared to information or memory data. The plot revolves around a secret service staffed by cybernetic humanoids that are assigned to track an elusive computer hacker. The hacker acts like a computer virus and has the ability to enter and control any computer network as well as human minds and bodies at its will. The secret service traces the virus to Japan's Ministry Of Foreign Affairs and the espionage deepens. Set in the year 2029 A.D. it is a stunning sci-fi spectacle that surpasses mainstream animation with its meticulously

detailed artistic direction and a uniquely intelligent storyline.

Ghost in the Shell was based on a series of graphic novels by Masamune Shirow. Directed by Mamoru Oshii who also directed the lauded Urusei Yatsura and Patlabor series. The production team also included art director Hiromasa Ogura of the impressive Ninja Scroll and Wings of Honneamise films. Mechanic design by Shoji Kawamoro, director of Macross Plus. Most of these other titles are available on video through Manga. The closing theme of *Ghost* is performed by U2 and Brian Eno with sound effects courtesy of Primus' Les Claypool. There is a 90 min original form, and a special anniversary edition running 120 minutes.

Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga

Doctor Blood's Coffin

(1960, Dir. by Sidney Furie. With Kieron Moore, Hazel Court, Ian Hunter.) Anyone expecting this to resemble a Hammer film of the same period, be forewarned: although *Coffin* is British and stars a gifted cast that includes Hammer veteran Hazel Court, this low-budgeter stands out by contrast as a testimonial to Hammer's ingenuity and craftsmanship. Take for example the Hammer story formula which nearly always includes a beginning hook, a segment before the opening credits designed to capture the viewer's interest and imagination. For the hook in Hammer's *Kiss of the Vampire*, an old and scruffy professor interrupts a burial by plunging a shovel through the coffin lid, a beautiful young girl's face appears, her smiling lips exposing fangs. She is the professor's own daughter, and he has had to perform the unpleasant but necessary task of freeing her soul with a stake (or in this case a shovel) through the heart. The hook does its job. The viewer is willingly reeled in and netted for the rest of the film. The hook for *Doctor Blood's Coffin* consists of a static shot of Blood on the receiving end of a severe scolding from another doctor for his unethical experi-

ments... no action or excitement, just lip service.

Another great quality of the Hammer horrors is the achievement of verisimilitude no matter how preposterous the proceedings. Peter Cushing has joked on occasion about his frequent visits to his doctor to learn how to perform his surgeries with realism in his Frankenstein film series. No matter if Cushing is transplanting a brain or grafting on hands, the viewer watches and believes. In *Doctor Blood's Coffin*, actor Kieron Moore removes the beating heart from a living man and transplants it into the chest of a corpse with all the same skill and conviction it takes to open a can of Campbells' tomato soup and plop it into the pan. The only difference is that it takes him less time to complete this process than it takes to open a can of soup. This is not all Moore's fault, though. The film's budget didn't allow for the expense of a lab.

The plot is simple, too simple to be drawn out for 92 minutes. After his expulsion from a European medical university for unethical experimentation, Doctor Blood returns to his small village in Cornwall to secretly resume his horrible experiments in an abandoned tin mine. As villagers disappear one by one and Blood carelessly leaves blatant clues everywhere, it is only a matter of time before a nurse, Linda (Hazel Court), suspects Dr. Blood is responsible. Just to prove to Linda he is not mad, he illustrates his theories to her by digging up the corpse of her long-dead husband and restoring his life by installing a new heart. One can easily accept this brand of science in an Ed Wood movie, but not in a film like this. The performers are too competent, earnestly trying their best to make us believe it all. The story and screenplay (by Jerry Juran, James Kelly, and Peter Miller) make their task insurmountable, however, in the end, the resurrected corpse strangles Blood, a finish made as appropriately dull as the film's beginning hook.

Perhaps the most unforgivable disappointment of *Doctor Blood's Coffin* is the fact that director Sidney J.

(continued)

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Furie and cinematographer Stephen Dale have failed to capture the on-location beauty of one of Southwest England's most quaint and lovely regions, Cornwall. Director Furie would later show much visual style in his mainstream film, *The Iceman*, but here his camera lingers on open bloody chests of living, unanesthetized victims far too often. Then again, when one finds himself wanting to see more countryside in a horror film, something is fundamentally wrong with the entire picture.

Reviewed by Mark A. Miller

The Love Captive

(1969, b&w, Dir. by Larry Crane, with Charlotte Russe, Jacqueline Ricardo, Colette Alexander)

Give a mental patient a movie camera and what'll you get? Yeah, something just like *The Love Captive*...

"The torture and restraint collection of the late, great Harry Houdini" is on display at Manzini's Museum of the Macabre in Greenwich Village. (Which, amazingly, was an actual though short-lived, flea-bag tourist attraction on Bleecker Street in the late '60s.) Jane, a blonde tenant of the dumpy Village Hotel next door, stays in the museum late one night, steals a strait-jacket from the wall, but can't get out: "Well, I'm locked in! Jacket and all!"

She then sits on an electric chair and watches as a bare-ass vampire babe climbs out of a coffin displaying a hairy bush, tattoos on her tits, and two gigantic fangs. A drooling werewolf suddenly appears, leaps on the vampire babe and chews her legs so enthusiastically that the woman's plastic fangs keep popping out of her mouth. A voodoo priestess then dances to a jazzy bongo beat as do the vampire and two other naked gals. The werewolf, like us, seems confused by what's happening but not Jane who watches them with an utterly blank expression...

Of course, none of this makes a damn bit of sense but, then again, none of what follows does either.

Like Jane, the naked gals who were dancing with the werewolf are also tenants of the hotel. Gail dresses like a man and stuffs a penis-like object in her panties to give herself a healthy bulge. Sybil takes over the museum and promptly ties Gail spread-eagle to a cross, holds a knife to her belly and forces Gail to have sex with a man who has the hairiest ass in motion picture history.

Meanwhile, two cops inexplicably hold a speaker to various hotel room walls which broadcasts an audio tape saying, "We know everything about you, girly." This causes Jane to shout, "Alright, alright, I did it!" as she opens her closet revealing hotel clerk Alex Mann (the guy who gets his leg hacked off in *I Drink Your Blood*) naked and shackled in chains.

The narrator (who sounds like he's watching all this for the first time) sums it up: "That's right, we know who and what they are: wicked women who satisfy their own perverted desires no matter whom they hurt. Yes, they have a Love Captive here, alright. But they themselves are captives of their own lustful passions." Oh. Right. Exactly.

Hard to believe adult human beings made this. Of course, it's not hard to believe that it was made by Larry Crane, the auteur of *All Women Are Bad* which also stars Jane's stolen strait-jacket. But what the hell. Some of us just love watching a werewolf dance with naked women to bongo music.

From the 35mm clearly-out-of-its-mind negative. Available from Something Weird Video, (206)361-3759.

Reviewed by Frank Henenlotter

The Three Musketeers

(1939) Dir. by Allan Dwan. With Don Ameche, The Ritz Brothers, Binnie Barnes, Joseph Schildkraut, Gloria Stuart, Lionel Atwill: *The Gorilla* (1931) Dir. by Allan Dwan. With The Ritz Brothers, Anita Louise, Lionel Atwill, Bela Lugosi, Patsy Kelly.

The Ritz Brothers (Harry, Al and Jimmy) were three



zany musical-comedy entertainers who enjoyed forty years of stage, screen, television and nightclub success. Their spirited antics were admired by (and often adapted by) such comics as Mel Brooks, Sid Caesar and Jerry Lewis.

During the late '30s the Ritzes made a string of popular feature films for 20th Century Fox. In movies, the brothers were at their best when they essentially played themselves: a trio of brash show-biz characters who blundered in and out of somebody's troubled production. The lightweight framework allowed them to perform their musical routines and breezy gags without too much damage to the main plot.

In 1939 Fox produced a pair of Ritz Brothers films which happen to be the least representative of the team's talents, confining the three madmen to very rigid, restrictive stories. In one instance, the change of pace succeeded; in the other, it didn't.

The Three Musketeers is "A Musical Comedy Version" of Alexandre Dumas's famous story about France's noble swordsmen. The screenplay is faithful to the original story: Don Ameche stars as the dashing D'Artagnan and takes on all comers to protect the Queen from pretenders to the throne. Literature lovers can breathe a sigh of relief: The Ritz Brothers do not have the title roles. In the film, the King's musketeers repair to an inn, where "Three Lackeys" (as the credits call the Ritzes) merrily work in the scullery. The curious comics try on the musketeers' raiment and are promptly mistaken for the authentic cavaliers.

There is very little of the Ritz brand of comedy in this film, although they improvise freely as their scenes end, and Harry occasionally tries for some shtick by crossing his eyes and walking funny. A precision dance interlude gives the brothers a real workout, as they athletically play percussion instruments. Most of the time, however, the comedians humorously react to the political intrigue surrounding them. The story is played straight, and a colorful cast brings it to life: Ameche, very good as D'Artagnan; Miles Mander as the crafty Cardinal Richelieu; Lionel Atwill as his crony

deRochefort; Joseph Schildkraut and Gloria Stuart as the royal couple; Pauline Moore as a lady-in-waiting. A special treat for movie buffs is the appearance of three flavorful character actors, John Carradine (as a frightened innkeeper), Russell Hicks and Douglass Dumbrille (as genuine musketeers). Binnie Barnes, as the cunning Lady DeWinter, makes a fine foil for the Ritzes' clowning.

The production is glossy; every penny shows on the screen. Allan Dwan, a fine director who often worked on Douglas Fairbanks swashbucklers, brings appropriate verve and style to this story. *The Three Musketeers* was The Ritz Brothers's favorite picture, and from the careful attention paid to it, it's easy to see why. The video's print quality is flawless, adding to the film's handsome look.

The studio followed this success with another well-worn literary property, a dated comedy-mystery play called *The Gorilla*. When Fox threw this book at The Ritz Brothers, they smelled trouble and threw it back. They rejected the script and were suspended. The publicity generated by the team's walkout forced studio chief Darryl Zanuck to intercede, and Zanuck tried to save face by bolstering production with a capable director (Allan Dwan again) and a better-than-average cast.

The Ritzes, unfortunately, were right. *The Gorilla* is a lemon. There is plenty of creepy-old-house atmosphere, but the story's theatrical origins are apparent. The Ritz Brothers have absolutely nothing to do - no music, no specialties, and no patter. They play three bumbling detectives hunting for a killer at large. Harry Ritz yells most of his dialogue, as if to compensate for its not being funny, and desperately mugs for fifteen seconds when he meets the gorilla of the title. Lugosi and Atwill, as smiling, dignified suspects, are the main attractions of this disappointing film.

The Gorilla isn't good Ritz Brothers. It's arguably their worst starring vehicle, but at least they tried to warn us.

Reviewed by Scott MacGillivray

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EROTIC DR. JECKYLL '75. Harry Reems, Terri Hall, C.J. Laing. Perverse hunchback and Dr. Jeckyll get laid in hilarious XXX obscurity.

FEMALE CHAUVINISTS '74. Candy Samples, Uschi Digard, Roxanne Brewer. German language, no subtitles.



FORCED ENTRY '74. Harry Reems. Vietnam vet slaughters female prey. "THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE OF ADULT CINEMA"—Raw.



HARDGORE '73. Hospital DEATH cult terrorize teenage Maria with meathooks, castration, deathdreams, decapitation, throat slashings & blood orgies!

HEADS OR TAILS '73. Uschi Digard, Rene Bond, Sandey Carey. German language with no subtitles.

HOT SUMMER IN THE CITY '76. Lisa Baker. Black militants abduct & defile lily white virgin. Directed by Gail Palmer.

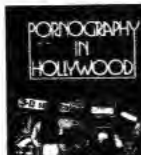


INCREDIBLE SEX RAY MACHINE '74. Uschi Digard, John Holmes. Mad scientist satisfies perverse cravings. WALL TO WALL SEX!



JOY '75. Sharon Mitchell. Teen nympho causes female rape spree in New York City. HUSTLER's highest rating!

MY TEENAGE DAUGHTER '74. When daddy's little girl became everybody's little girl.



PORNOGRAPHY IN HOLLYWOOD '72. Uschi Digard, Malta. Documents early 70's sex industry. Music by The Spears. D: Carlos Tobalina.

PORNOGRAPHY & PROSTITUTION IN THE ORIENT '73. Documents Asian sex culture. Filmed in Taipei, Hong Kong & Tokyo.

PUNK ROCK '76. Private dick searches for junkie runaway in New York's punk rock scene. Original music by "Eldo and the Stilettos". D: Carter Stevens.



ROSEBUD '76. Darby Lloyd Raines, Jamie Gillis. An erotic story of incest & suicide. D: Roberta Findlay. First time on video.



SEX WISH '75. Zebedy colt. Terri Hall. C.J. Laing. Crazy nightwalker violates victims hideously. Uncut.

STORY OF JOANNA '75. Jamie Gillis, Terri Hall, Zebedy Colt. Wealthy libertine shapes sensitive girl into total sex slave. D: Gerard Damiano.



TEENAGE DEVIATE '76. Annie Sprinkle is sex starved runaway addicted to bubble-gum and gang bangs.

TEENAGE SEX KITTEN '74. Rene Bond. Teenagers defiled by demented old hermit!

XXX DOUBLE FEATURE

#9 Big breast superstar Candy Samples stars in THE ELEVATOR and SEX AS YOU LIKE IT. Also starring John Holmes, Sandy Dempsey & Sandy Carey.



XXX DOUBLE FEATURE #28

EVIL WAYS OF LOVE '72. Early Gerard Damiano production. SWEET & SOUR '73. Jamie Gillis, Cindy West. New York sex slayer punishes busty women.

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GREAT HOLLYWOOD RAPE SLAUGHTER '71. Frustrated filmmaker goes on bloody shotgun rampage. First time on video.

JOHN HOLMES AND THE ALL STAR SEX QUEENS '80. John Holmes screws Candy Samples, Uschi Digard, Kitten Natividad & Kelli Stewart. **LINDA LOVELACE FOR PRESIDENT** '76. The original XXX superstar in silly sex comedy.



MISTY 1975. Rebecca Brooke, Jennifer Welles, Chris Jordan. Intelligent eroticism. by Joe Sarno. 1st time on video.

PANORAMA BLUE '74. Rene Bond, Uschi Digard, John Holmes. Color sex-travaganza!

PRETTY WET LIPS '74. Bridgette Maier. Buster & Chickie violate schoolgirl hitchhiker & suburban wives. First time on video.



PERMISSIVE '72. Teen girl becomes mixed up in London "groupie scene". Original music by Forever More, Camus, and Titus Groan.



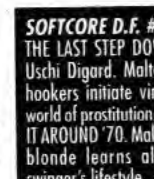
ROAD OF DEATH '73. Carol Connors. Gang of bikers rape busty blonde chicks. Original music by The Joe Banana Thing. First time on video.

SADDLE TRAMP WOMEN '72. Candy Samples, Rene Bond. Harlots in fine garters serve gang raping outlaws. Beautiful color.



SAPHO DARLING '69. The highly sensual, busty Yvonne D'Angers radiates sweet love in sensitive story of lesbianism. From Sweden.

TARZ & JANE & BOY & CHEETAH '75. Georgina Spelvin. Tarz has his dark bitten off by a crocodile, Cheeta sticks his "Throbbing Pink" into Jane's "Keyster" & much more happens in hilarious Tarzan spoof. First time on video.



SOFTCORE D.F. #4 THE LAST STEP DOWN '71. Uschi Digard, Malta. Busty hookers initiate virgin into world of prostitution. SPREAD IT AROUND '70. Malta. Busty blonde learns all about swinger's lifestyle.

SOFTCORE DOUBLE FEATURE #7

Busty superstar Uschi Digard stars in SKIN FLICK MADNESS '71 & THE MAGIC MIRROR '70.



SOFTCORE D.F. #8 JANIE '70. Sadistic teenager leaves bloody trail of hacked-up bodies in her sexual pursuit of "Daddy". D: Roberta Findlay. Also includes the Findlay's TAKE MY HEAD '71.

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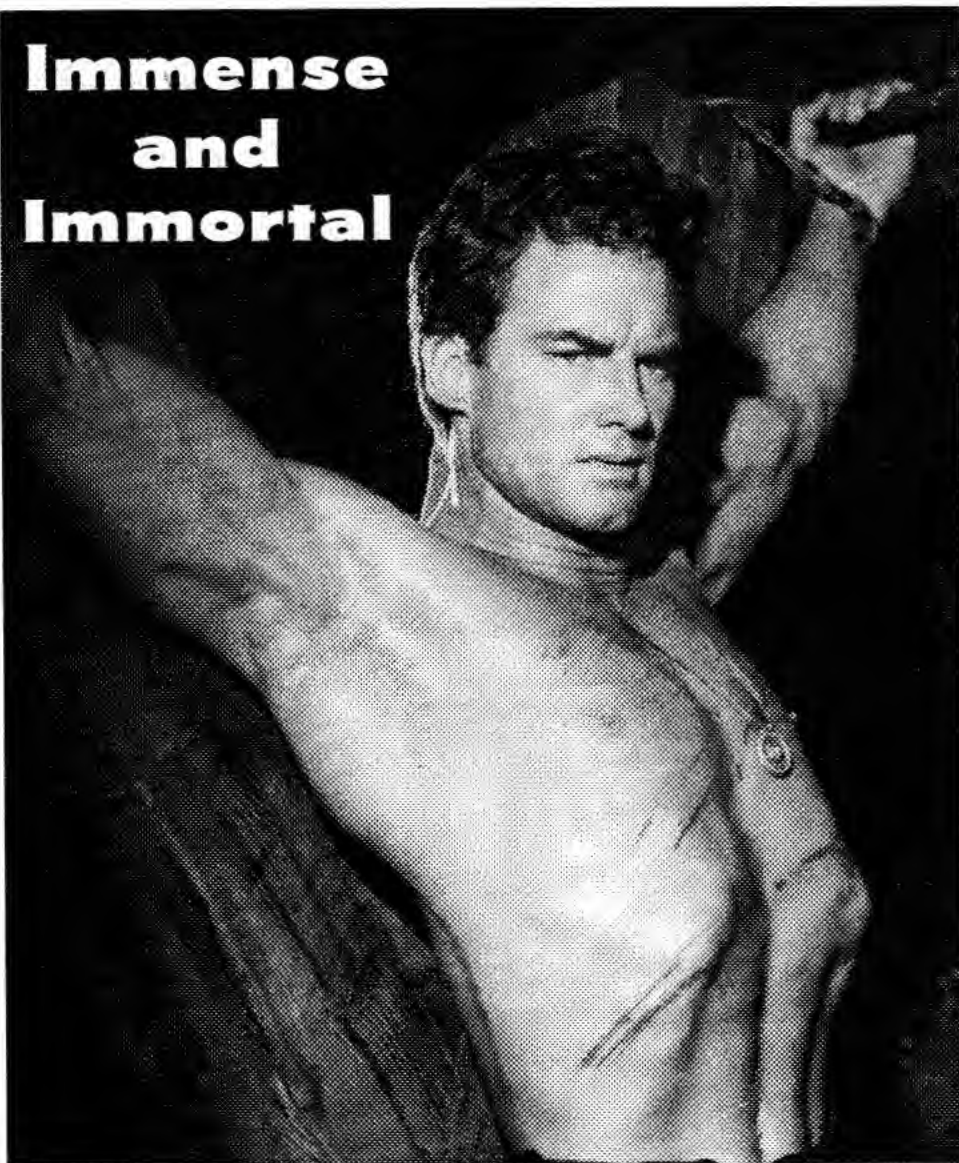
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Immense and Immortal



Steve Reeves in *The Slave*.

by Stephen Flaccasier

With this installment we start our look at the actors and their movies. We've made the best effort to list their films in the order we believe they were produced, but we fully acknowledge mistakes will be made in the line ups. When no production date could be found a "best guess" or the release date was used.

Steve Reeves: Undisputed Leader of the Pack

Steve Reeves had already become a sensation in the media. He altered perception of bodybuilding from the idea of overgrown ape-men to show that with power and strength can also come symmetry and balance. Reeves was not only a natural for the screen, but found the role he would forever be associated with right from the start.

Hercules (original title *La Fatiche Di Ercole*, 1957, Dir: Pietro Francisci, co-starring Sylva Koscina, Gianna Maria Canale, Fabrizio Mioni, Ivo Garrani, Mimmo Palmara). This is about the only place to start when looking at these films, but in many ways this entry is as dissimilar from its followers as it is the basis for the genre. It includes many elements that would become regular features in

future films. It's the groundwork basis which all other films followed.

Hercules is a film that proves it knows what it needs to keep the audience's attention. The heroine Iole is saved from her out-of-control chariot by Hercules, thus giving the film an explosion of action to start off and establishing the love story all within the first few minutes. Hercules and Iole are kept together by the story since he's accepted a job from her father to train her bullheaded, hot tempered brother Iphitus (played by Reeves regular co-star Mimmo Palmara). After several scenes establishing Hercules' strength the film becomes a reworking of the Jason legend, with Hercules joining the Argonauts on a search for the Golden Fleece. There are outlandishly bad monsters, beautiful women, romance, a band of monkey men, battles, and the classic sight of Reeves fighting off all comers with broken chains attached to his wrists. The film ends with hints to a sequel.

It should be noted that there is an alternate version of the film which sometimes shows up, most recently on the American Movie Classics cable network. This version is the edition put out

by distributor Joseph Levine for his 1972 re-release of the film with its sequel as a double bill. For the newer version they redo the opening credits (the original had a cartoon sea of stars forming an outline of Reeves, while the newer one has a classier red background with gold lettered credits.) The biggest difference is that they've thrown out the old voice track and recorded a new one with different dialogue. No real change in any scenes, just that the words have been rewritten while keeping the original intent. We even lose the great "I fear you may be ironic" line from the Amazon queen.

Hercules Unchained (original title: *Ercole E La Regina De Lidia* 1958 Dir: Pietro Francisci, co-starring: Sylva Koscina, Sylvia Lopez, Primo Carnera) picks up right where the previous film left off. We join Hercules, Iole and their young friend Ulysses as they return to the homeland of Hercules. On their way they get caught in the middle of two warring brothers over the rule of their late father's land. For Reeves fans this is an even better film than the first one, thanks to the time devoted to his character. His fight scene with former wrestler Primo Carnera and the climactic battle where he rides a horse drawn chariot into war more than meet the action quota, and his lounging around the island getting a rubdown from Ulysses takes care of the beefcake. The lighting and effects done by Mario Bava add a great fantasy atmosphere to the film.

White Warrior (original title: *Agi Murad, Il Diavolo Bianco*, 1959, Dir: Riccardo Freda, Co-starring Georgia Moll, Renato Baldie, Scilla Gabel, Gerard Herter) This film followed soon after the two Hercules films, and was an adaptation of a Tolstoy story. We find Reeves as the leader of an oppressed but powerful people who are trying to free themselves from an invading army. This would become a familiar theme in Reeves films. Here we have several great fights, including an impressive wrestling match, but as would also be the case with *Goliath and the Barbarians*, it's the torture scenes and Reeves tied shirtless to a bed that seem to be the only photos printed in books. For years it was impossible to find this film on video, until Sinister Cinema and Something Weird Video both released copies within months of each other.

Goliath and the Barbarians (original title *Il Terrore Dei Barbari* 1959, Dir: Carlo Campogalliani, co-starring Chelo Alonso, Bruce Cabot, Giulia Tubini, Livio Lorenzon, Luciano Marin) The plot is fairly simple; Barbarian hordes are storming over the Italian countryside about 600 AD. After his father, the local leader, is killed, Emiliano leads his people in revolt, dressing at times as an animal type creature named Goliath. Trouble brews when Emiliano falls for Lando, daughter of his hated enemy. Though he's captured and tortured several times it's not until the climax that the heavies learn who he truly is.

There is a begrudging love affair between Reeves and the incredible Chelo Alonso. Look for Livio Lorenzon and Luciano Marin playing the two main barbarians who battle for favor in the eyes of their leader Bruce Cabot. They play these same roles often in the genre and always entertain. Bruce Cabot is best known for his role in *King Kong*, and except for a scene or two chewing out

Lorenzon and Marin he's barely in the film.

The Giant of Marathon (original title: *La Battaglia Di Maratona* 1959, Dir: Jaques Tourneur, co-starring: Mylene Demonge, Sergio Fantoni, Alberto Lupo, Daniele Varga, Miranda Kampa, Ivo Garrani, Philippe Hersent, Alan Steel). While not featuring any demigods, this is based on a legend that has a good chance of having been true. It's the story of Philippiades, a big winner at the early Olympic games and the Captain of the Sacred Guards of Athens. Upon returning home from the games Philippiades is courted by high ranking members of the government as a pawn in a plan to return a former Athens leader to power. A fantastic sea battle at the end, but no monsters and wrathful thunderbolts were needed to carry the film. The actors in the climax are only wearing small bathing suits which tends to increase the muscle quotient through the roof, but it's worked into the plot as not to be overly gratuitous. The love story they have for Reeves shows signs of wear and, if anything, is the gratuitous part of the film. Keep an eye on the actor playing the Spartan leader who couches for Reeves near the end of the film. It's Alan Steel who would soon work his way up the ranks into starring vehicles himself.

Last Days of Pompeii (orig. title *Gli Ultimi Giorni di Pompeii* 1959, Dir: Mario Bonnard, co-starring Christine Kaufmann, Fernando Rey, Barbara Carroll, Mimmo Palmara) shows how much of a routine the plots had become. The "Returning hero is lead astray but is brought back because of true love" scenario is one that's easy to work action into. There's a wrestling match with his old partner Mimmo Palmara and a few good sword fights while we're waiting for the mountain to blow. This is a high class, big budget entry and Reeves does not disappoint.

Thief of Baghdad (orig. title: *Il Ladro Di Bagdad*, 1960, dir: Arthur Lubin, co-starring: Georgia Moll, Edy Vessel, Arturo Dominici, Daniele Vargas, George Chamarat) returns Reeves to a fantasy setting for an enjoyable re-make of the Doug Fairbanks film. Playing a bit like Robin Hood, Karim steals from the rich and does it out to the poor on the streets of Baghdad. Creating a vehicle for Reeves that was more for kids than adults was a smart move and they've done a great job with it. Maybe by today's standards it would be a bit lame for the average eight-year-old, but at the time this came out there were no video games and TV shows so rough you're supposed to need a rating system to save their tiny little minds. This is a light-hearted adventure that's got enough action for the adults.

Morgan the Pirate (orig. title: *Morgan Il Pirata*, 1960, dir: Andre Petoth, co-starring Valarie LaGrange, Ivo Garrani, Lydia Alfonsi, Giulio Bosetti, Chelo Alonso) revisited a classic genre. Reeves turned out one of the few swashbucklers to come along in years although most of the action is kept to the land instead of the high seas. It's a great adventure, balances the action with the drama well and includes an incredible sword fight for Reeves to take part in. If it's at all possible Chelo Alonso looks even better in this film than back in Goliath And The Barbarians. Her's is a small supporting part, but teaming her with Reeves still in

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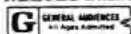
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his prime makes the film watchable just for their scenes together. After production of this film, many "Hercules" stars soon found themselves out to sea with scripts using the word "Avast" more than ever before.

Duel of the Titans (orig. title *Romolo E. Remo* 1961, dir: Sergio Corbucci, co-starring: Gordon Scott, Virna Lisi, Franco Volpi, Laura Solari, Piera Lulli, Massimo Girotti) concerns itself with the story of Romulus and Remus, the twins raised by a wolf; the brothers went on to found the empire of Rome. Reeves is teamed with former Tarzan Gordon Scott making his entry into the S&S genre with this film. Reeves' Romulus turns out to be the more level headed of the two brothers. When he learns from his dying mother that he and his twin were fathered by a god, Romulus takes it upon himself to lead his people away from the oppression of the King.

This was such an obvious choice of subject matter to use in teaming up these two actors that the promotional department had their work all but done for them. While the two men are equally

matched in their scenes, Reeves plays a regular good guy while Scott got to go off the deep end as a mad for power brother. Virna Lisi plays the King's niece Julia who has a forbidden love for Reeves.

The Trojan Horse (orig. title *La Guerra Di Troia* 1961, dir: Giorgio Ferroni, co-starring: John Drew Barrymore, Juliette Mayniel, Hedy Vessel, Ludia Alfonsi, Warner Bentivegna, Arturo Dominici, Mimmo Palmara) let's Reeves act out another legend with the typical soap opera elements worked in. With Helen of Troy kidnapped and held, but not against her will, by the Spartans the captain of the guard Aeneas has his hands full in holding back the Trojans as they attempt to regain their living symbol. Possibly this and it's sequel *The Avenger* are the two films made by Reeves with the lowest impact. They don't truly focus on the character to make you understand who he is beyond the cardboard cutout they set up. The saving grace is another fight scene with reliable standby Mimmo Palmara. Also, the villainous

(continued)



Reeves and Chelo Alonso in *Goliath and the Barbarians*.

part of Ulysses is played by John Drew Barrymore, he of the piercing eyes and wicked acting style that darkens every film in the genre lucky enough to have him along.

The Slave a.k.a. *The Son of Spartacus* (orig. title: *Il Figlio Di Spartacus* 1962, dir: Sergio Corbucci, co-starring: Jaques Sernas, Gianna Maria Canale, Claudio Gora, Ivo Gerrani, Enzo Fiermonte) sort of dwelled in infamy for years among fans who'd never gotten a chance to see it. There were continually strong rumors that it was an unofficial sequel to Kirk Douglas's *Spartacus*. Those of us staying up late four years ago to see this on TNT, while not disappointed, were surprised. Reeves appears as Randus, a young Centurion highly regarded by his commanders. What no one knows is that he's the son of the slain slave-leader Spartacus. After discovering this, and learning the life of a slave first-hand, Randus works in the shadows of night to continue what his father began. Using his father's helmet and sword Randus is able to undermine the leader of Lydia, leaving a red "S" behind as a reminder of who's been there. After some extensive, elaborate fight scenes, the climax is incredibly anti-climatic but does wrap up the loose ends and hints of a sequel that never did get made.

The surprise of this all is that, after anticipating a lavish spectacle resembling a Hollywood class-A production, we get a disguised lavish Zorro movie that's better than any real Zorro movie. Not a bad thing, just not what we expected. The fight scenes start early and continue on with more and more of Reeve's costume being shed all the time. It was great to see Reeves in another gladiator film and the Zorro connection is an enjoyable twist, but it was a sign that the S&S films were running out of steam. The character of "Spartacus" would be brought out many times in the genre whenever the plot called for a leader of a slave rebellion.

The Avenger a.k.a. *The Longest Day, The Last Glory of Troy* (Orig. title "La Legende Di Enea" 1963, dir: Albert Band, co-starring: Carla Marlier, John Garko, Lana Orfei, Giacomo Rossi Stuart, Enzo Fiermonte) continues the plight of Aeneas from *The Trojan Horse*, who's now given the title of "Prince." His people have been traveling for years, and have gotten permission to settle on some land. When his adversaries stampede someone else's cattle across their new home Aeneas is caught in the middle of warring rulers once again. There is some peace that is brought, and a romance for Aeneas with Princess Lavinia but this only makes matters worse. After much hardship and an inventive flashback to *The Trojan Horse*, Aeneas has a final battle for the freedom of his people and the hand of Lavinia.

Again, while it's great to see Reeves revive the character, there's not much going on in the film we haven't seen before. The flashbacks to *The Trojan Horse* are nicely introduced by having Reeves come across a wall mural of his city's defeat. It's a good segue that works infinitely better than the old "Tell me about yourself..." as the hero stares off into the distance bit.

Sandokan the Great (orig. title *Sandokan, Le Tigre Di Mompracem* 1963, dir: Umberto Lenzi, co-starring: Genevieve Grad, Maurice Poli, Loe Anchoriz, Rik Battaglia, Andrea Bosis) has been another film of great mystery that, once again thanks to Ted Turner's cable stations, we've gotten a chance to see. While a familiar character in other parts of the world, this was the average American filmgoer's first acquaintance with Sandokan. For many years it was impossible to tell if this movie actually existed. If you have spent any time at all trying to look these films up in your average movie guide you'll find that the listings are so vague that what's said for this film could have easily been said for its sequel *Pirates of the Seven Seas*. But this is a modern day adventure, with lots of location shooting, and

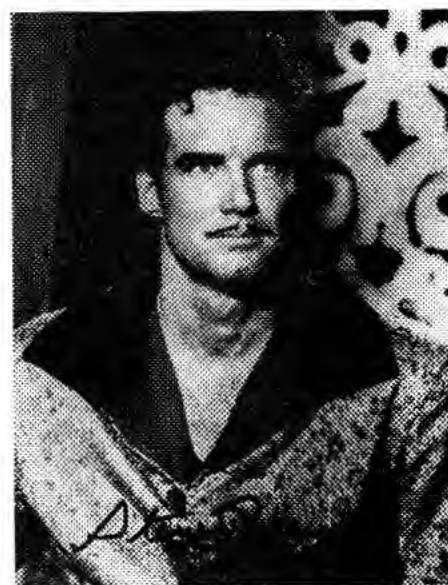
Reeves getting to use, not only a pistol, but a machine gun to plow down his enemies.

Pirates of the Seven Seas a.k.a. *Sandokan the Pirate* (orig. title: unknown, 1964, dir: Umberto Lenzi, co-starring: Jacqueline Sassard, Mimmo Palmara, Andrea Bosis, Nando Gazzolo) is the Sandokan we're used to seeing. Sandokan goes up against the British, led by John Burke who's imprisoned a Rajah in an attempt to seize his country. With the help of the Rajah's daughter, Sandokan saves the Rajah and attains yet another girlfriend for a happy conclusion to the film.

Saving Mimmo Palmara from jail in an elaborate scheme that includes faking his death and someone else being buried alive is a cool twist, but doesn't get them very close to their goal. This film is not a bad ending to Reeves' career in the genre by any means, but it's obvious that the sword and sandal adventures were winding to a close.

If you're a Steve Reeves fan you're not going to want to miss the last film he's made, *A Long Ride From Hell*. It's one of his best. It's also a great crime that this should have been just his first in a long line of Westerns. The man was born to play these parts. The fact that he had a hand in writing the script makes it all the more impressive that he knew what he could do on the screen. The pace is steady in this simple story of revenge. Reeves has to take it as well as dish it out in these fight scenes. It does seem to take place in that magical land where guns don't need to be reloaded, but this certainly isn't the only film to visit there. Otherwise, the film clicks in all the right places. I've heard that the Steve Reeves Fan Club is selling copies on video. If true, buy it.

Other films: Reeves started his film acting with a supporting part in Ed Wood's "thriller" *Jail Bait*, playing a police detective looking into a robbery and murder. Next up was a smaller part in the film *Athena*. Here Reeves is a supporting player, whose major contribution to the storyline is to oppose Athena's falling for an uptight politician when she could have him instead. The film is a comedy/musical, but it got him the attention of film producers who cast him as Hercules and... the rest is history. ■



The Thief of Baghdad.

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OF MIGHTY MICE and MEN



By Rudy Minger

When animation buffs get together, the discussion generally revolves around Disney (though the newer generation of fans talk a lot about Japanese animation.) One name that rarely comes up is that of the late Paul Terry of Terrytoons fame. When he's mentioned, it's usually with disdain.

You could almost call Terry the anti-Disney; he ground out his short cartoons every two weeks as cheaply as possible, and most of them look it. Terrytoons are generally slapdash and sloppy. In some of them you can see the brushstrokes of the cel paint on the characters. Also, story construction can range from weak to nonexistent, especially in the earlier efforts. Rather than come to some kind of coherent ending, many of the cartoons simply stop. It has been said that Paul Terry used to go around his studio measuring stacks of drawings with a ruler. When the stack of drawings got to a certain height, he would tell his animators to put an end to whatever cartoon they were working on. Terry was primarily a businessman, making cartoons on an assembly line without putting much thought into what went into them.

While he did have a hand in drawing the cartoons at first, his later participation was limited primarily to contributing jokes. They would be put in the films whether they fit or not.

And yet, Terrytoons were the cartoons of the common man. With the exception of Mighty Mouse, their characters (Gandy Goose and Sourpuss, Farmer Al Falfa, Heckle and Jeckyll) were generally underdogs, usually living on the fringes of society. Much of the humor had a definite "us against the world" quality. In one Heckle and Jeckyll cartoon, our heroes pursue an arduous treasure hunt through water, through air, through jungle, and finally find a chest full of gold coins, only to have it taken away from them by a little man who's followed them throughout the picture. He turns out to be a tax collector. The two magpies mournfully turn to the audience and one of them announces, "You can't beat the tax man, even in a cartoon."

Of course Terrytoons did other kinds of comedies. Their Mighty Mouse takeoffs of Gilbert and Sullivan pirate operettas and lampoons of old-time melodramas come to mind. But the comedy

of frustration remained a frequent theme of Terrytoons. One popular series was "The Terry Bears," which concerned the mishaps of two bear children and their father. (The mother never seemed to be around; perhaps four characters were too expensive to animate.) In one typical cartoon, the father buys a TV set and spends the entire short trying to install the antenna on the roof. He falls off the roof, he falls through the roof, he gets electrocuted.

The poor bear winds up destroying his television, antenna, and nearly demolishes his house. Finally, in utter resignation, he marches down the street with his two cubs and buys three tickets at the local movie theater.

This ending may well have been wishful thinking on Paul Terry's part, since he sold his cartoon backlog to television in the '50s. He was the first major cartoon producer to do so. As recently as the late '70s, even his black and white silent cartoons were still being broadcast overseas (I saw a number of them in Puerto Rico in 1979, along with a few black and white Van Bueren cartoons) and they may well be playing still.

By the 1960s Paul Terry was long retired, and most Terrytoons were being made for television. Even here the comedy of defeat continued. Was there ever a bigger loser in the history of television cartoons than Deputy Dawg? Laboring somewhere in the godforsaken depths of the Deep South, overworked, underpaid (in one cartoon he tells his sheriff boss, "I thought I was gettin' paid what I was worth." His boss replies, "You are. That's why yer workin' for nothing.") Perpetually harassed by the likes of Muskie the muskrat, Vincent Van Gopher and an endless procession of lowlifes who crossed his trail, Deputy Dawg haplessly tried to uphold the law and was usually defeated at every turn. Even when he won, there was usually some wrapup gag to deprive him of his momentary triumph. He definitely struck a chord with viewers, and not just children. When these cartoons originally came out, they were so popular that 20th Century Fox (the releasing company for Terrytoons) actually got a number of requests to run them in movie theaters.

Incidentally, Ralph Bakshi, the cartoon director who went on to do *Fritz the Cat*, *Heavy Traffic*, and most recently *Cool World* (currently out on video), got his big break in the field of painting, animating and later directing *Deputy Dawg*. Bakshi hasn't forgotten him, since the Deputy turned up a few years ago in a cameo role in Bakshi's *Mighty Mouse* TV series playing a Justice of the Peace.

One of the last Terrytoon characters to be introduced before the studio shut down was Sad Cat, which Bakshi also worked on. Yet another loser character, Sad Cat was a timid, insecure, scrawny feline who was continually bullied by his two roughneck brothers, Vladimore and Fenimore. Sad Cat, however, had the advantage of his super-ego, a more powerful version of himself that continually helped him out of trouble and did his best to boost Sad Cat's ego as well. Again, the cartoons relied heavily on the comedy of the underdog. Sad Cat doesn't have much of a reputation, having been pillaged in print by animation writers Jim Korkis and Leonard Maltin, but I always liked



him. Since he ran from 1964 to 1968, I couldn't have been the only one. Some of you may remember the catchphrase he ended every cartoon with—"Gee, I'm a tiger!"

Terrytoons started out ragged and slapdash, and though they did get a little slicker as time went on, they didn't improve that much. For the most part they were pretty lowbrow. But they weren't a total loss, either. The best of them could be genuinely funny and inventive and even the more run-of-the-mill ones had their moments of offbeat humor. Some even had a bit of pathos to them. There was a Terrytoons version of "The Bremen Town Musicians" that actually played it straight most of the way through and was, in parts, downright heartbreaking.

I recall, years ago, watching a Terrytoon with one of my old employers, a man in his fifties who was indifferent to cartoons. (It was a slow day at work and there wasn't much else on.) There was a bullfight going on, and the bull got a good whack in the side. The bull reached inside his hide, pulled out a busted timepiece, then turned to the bull-fighter and said, "You want to buy a watch?"

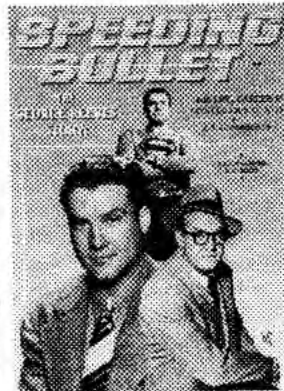
That might not strike you as a funny joke, but my boss went into hysterics—one of the rare times I ever saw him really laugh. He had tears running down his cheeks and when he was done laughing he said, "Oh God, that was funny! I wonder how they thought that up."

Cartoons for the common man. ■

Last Chance to Order!

Our distributor found one last box of mint, uncirculated copies of *Cult Movies* #14, which features *Speeding Bullet*, the book-length bio of George Reeves' life, career and tragic death. This issue also includes Gordon Scott, Ed Wood, Godzilla, Jean Rollin, Harry Novak's *Agony of Love* and much more. We have exactly 40 copies — once they're gone, they're gone forever!

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Directing The Madness: Ed Bernds & The 3 Stooges



Ed Bernds, shown here with the Stooges exhibiting the Laurel Award for being the top two-reel money makers, directed 25 Stooge shorts and three of their feature films.

Interview by Coco Kiyonaga & Buddy Barnett

Edward Bernds is well known to *Cult Movies* readers as the director and writer of many of the best Three Stooges subjects made at Columbia Pictures in the mid 1940s to the early 1950's. Classic Stooge shorts like *Micro-Phonies*, *Three Little Pirates*, *Brideless Groom*, *Squareheads of the Round Table*, *Fright Night*, *Three Arabian Nuts* and *Crime On Their Hands* were all directed and co-written by Bernds. In all he directed 25 Stooges short subjects. He also directed three of their feature films, *The Three Stooges Meet Hercules*, *The Three Stooges in Orbit* and *Gold Raiders*. Ed Bernds also directed the live action segments of *The New Three Stooges* cartoon series in 1965.

Bernds directed many feature films including quite a few popular and well-remembered science fiction films: *World Without End*, *Queen of Outer Space*, *Spacemaster X-7* (which featured Stogie Moe Howard in a straight supporting role) and *Return of the Fly*. He also directed several *Blondie* and

Bowery Boys pictures.

Mr. Bernds started out his career as an engineer in radio in the mid 1920s; when talking pictures came in, Bernds transferred to United Artists Studios as a sound mixer. While at U.A. he worked on pictures with Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and the great D.W. Griffith. M. Bernds transferred to Columbia Pictures in 1929 and soon become their top sound engineer, working on every Frank Capra picture made at Columbia save one (*The Miracle Woman* in 1932).

Bernds worked as sound mixer on the very first Three Stooges short subject for Columbia; *Woman Haters* in 1934. For the next 10 years he did the sound on many of their shorts before being promoted to director in 1945.

Mr. Bernds recently took time out from the writing of his autobiography to share a few reminiscences with readers of *Cult Movies Magazine*.

CM: When did you decide to leave the sound department at Columbia and become a movie director?

EB: As soon as I came into a studio, I wanted to be a director. However, you can't be a director unless someone gives you a job. But you can be a writer at home. So I would write short stories. I wrote for this magazine quite often. When one of my stories would get published, I'd take it to show Harry Cohn, head of Columbia Pictures. Sometimes I'd spend hours outside his office waiting to see him. He'd read it and say, "That's all right, but we can't use that, we need a script. Why don't you write a script?" Well the idea of a script, kind of intimidated me but, eventually, I started on scripts.

Anyway, Frank Capra got Harry Cohn to give me a chance at directing. Capra knew that I wanted to be a director and he believed that I could do it so one day he told me to go see Harry Cohn that night. So that very night, I went to see Harry Cohn. The first thing Cohn said to me was, "I hear you want to be a director, what's the matter are you stupid or something?" But he gave me permission to be a director. He told me to go see Hugh McCollum. The first picture was a propaganda film. It turned out pretty well and he got letters of praise from Elmer Davies who was a big shot in Washington.

CM: What was it like working at Columbia?

EB: Well, for particulars, Jules White and Hugh McCollum each got to produce half of the short subjects at Columbia. Jules also got to direct many of them. Hugh directed only one that I can think of. I directed mostly what Hugh produced. When I graduated to B pictures then he would go back to using other directors.

McCollum was a rival of Jules White and didn't like him. So because I was McCollum's man, Jules didn't like me either. But Jules was a difficult man to get along with anyway. To me it was more maddening than if he had been angry at me or spiteful. But he was patronizing to me. He knew that I was just a young guy that had been a sound man and was trying to be a director.

The Columbia short subjects department was separated from the main lot by Beachwood drive. It was a strange kind of architectural setup. It was stage 7, an old, old stage, one of the first in Hollywood. In the front of it was a strip of offices that formed the wall in front of the stage. By the way, Jules office was on one end, then the secretary, then McCollum's office, and then mine. It had been Del Lord's office and when he moved up to directing features, McCollum gave me the office; what a day that was.

On top of the offices was where Columbia had its school. It had a school for the underage kids and they had a teacher, Lillian Barkley, there. McCollum had quite a temper and once when the kids were making too much noise, he went up there and yelled at them. Well, she marched right over to Harry Cohn's office. Believe me, Cohn did not defer to many people. But when she demanded to see him, she got right in and he damned well listened to her. Cohn of course told McCollum to control his temper.

On the bottom floor there was something called the Research Department where three little old ladies stayed with a huge pile of books, newspapers and everything else and if anybody wanted to know anything they would go down for information. Those three little old ladies would read the

papers and file away the facts. But what was so great for me was that they had all the first drafts of the films. They were called estimating drafts. They were there so that when the various departments needed to make estimates for their budgets they could be compared. Well, I could get these scripts and could learn about the budgets and study them and learn from them.

But my life as a director wasn't really exciting, or even very glamorous. I would come home, have dinner and start to prepare for the next day's shoot. We would start about 9 o'clock in the morning but I liked to get there early and look the set over and get things going.

CM: What did you think about working with the Three Stooges? Did you enjoy their type of comedy?

EB: I probably was a little tense at first because if I failed it would be many years of waiting down the drain for me. After all, I had been waiting 16 years for the chance to direct. I was so anxious to be a director that I was willing to accept anything to get my foot in the door. Of course, Hugh McCollum was the producer and I wanted to work with him. Also, directing a two-reeler is not as critical as directing a feature because of the cost.

As far as enjoying that type of comedy, well, I probably enjoy real life humor situations vs. slapstick humor a bit more: for example I like the humor in *It Happened One Night*. But I enjoyed working with the Three Stooges; it was a great experience.

CM: I notice that a lot of comedians are jealous of other people getting laughs but the Three Stooges don't seem to have that jealousy.

EB: Oh, they all liked each other and got along. Moe was a very intelligent guy. He really was. Terrific memory and he kept the other two in line. Larry had a tendency to have his mind to wander. He'd say, "I'll be back in a minute." We'd think he was going to the john but he was going to find a bookie and wouldn't come back for quite awhile.

CM: Moe was really the mastermind behind the whole thing?

EB: He was the boss both on screen and off



Ed Berns celebrates his birthday on the set surrounded by, among others, Shemp, Christine McIntyre, Larry and Moe.

screen. Even in story conferences when I would call the boys in. I'd call them in because I'd get ideas, I'd get material and Larry always came up with strange ideas and once in awhile would come in with something good that would possibly trigger some ideas. Moe would call him "Stupid!" or say to him, "Keep your mind on what we're doing. You're not listening!" Larry would just hang his head. Moe was just the same off screen as he was on—the boss, the tough boss.

I will always remember with gratitude how he accepted me and cooperated with me. If he had wanted to act like the big star he was and say, "The hell with this—a sound man going to direct us?!" he could have, but from the beginning he accepted me and cooperated. We had that settled before we ever started to shoot in story conferences.

Larry was called the third stooge and a lot of time he was a little flaky and a lot of his ideas were so off the wall that we couldn't use them. But it just wouldn't have been the same without him. Although he didn't do as much as the other two, he had to be there. When I directed a script we tried to give him more, but sometimes it was awfully hard. Once in a while he would contribute an idea for a gag but he'd usually just get slapped around.

CM: What about Curly?

EB: I only did five with Curly and he was really not well. The first one I did with Curly was *Bird in the Hand* and he was pretty sluggish in that. Believe me, a rookie director on his first picture is a little bit apprehensive and I knew that something had happened to Curly, but I wasn't prepared for him to be that bad, and oh my God! There was just panic, what am I going to do on my first picture! But Moe coached him the way you would a child and gave him the lines one at a time. On the next picture, a Western one, *Three Troubledoers*, Curly was not too good. But in *Micro-Phonies* he was good and he did another one, *Monkey Businessmen* and was not very good, and then for the fifth one, *Three Little Pirates*, he was himself again. I think it was only a month later when on a picture he conked out and never came back. He lived for seven years but that was the end of his acting career.



Ed Berns was the top sound mixer at Columbia for years. He worked on all but one of Frank Capra's Columbia features.

(continued)



The Stooges and Christine McIntyre in *Micro-Phonies*.

Micro-Phonies was released first because Hugh McCollum, my producer and good friend, wanted my best picture to be released first. And he could juggle the release the way he wanted to. That wasn't true of the feature picture producers because they had to be released under a deadline. But Mac was able to release *Micro-Phonies* first so that the bosses would see a better picture first.

CM: Most people consider *Micro-Phonies* to be one of your best pictures.

EB: Leonard Maltin calls it one of the best. And the critic of the Chicago Sun Times calls it the best. Anyway, it must have been awfully lucky to do this the first time out.

CM: Moe and Curly's brother Shemp Howard was called in to replace Curly after his massive stroke. How did that work out for you?

EB: Curly was Curly and no one could have ever taken his place of course because he was brilliant, but what a relief it was as a director when I had Shemp. Because Shemp was sharp, funny, on the ball and anxious to please, willing to take bumps. Shemp had a funny face. Some said he had a nose like a baked potato. His first Stooge picture was *Fright Night*. (Jules remade this as *Fling in the Ring*.) I had to use the script that was written for Curly due to scheduling, so it wasn't quite the same for Shemp although he did all right. But after that, when Elwood Ullman or I or Felix Adler wrote, we wrote with Shemp in mind and so the scripts were better for Shemp. I really liked *Squareheads at the Round Table*, for instance.

CM: That was a good one, did you do that one because you already had the standing set for a feature picture at Columbia?

EB: We frequently made use of standing sets and I've always wondered why Columbia allowed us to use those big beautiful sets. I guess they wanted to get their money out of the sets. What if the feature and the two-reelers with the same set were playing at the same theater together, that would be kind of a black eye wouldn't it? The producer and the director had the right to object to our using the set but I never heard of there being any trouble.

CM: I notice that when Shemp came in, you guys started giving Larry more to do since Curly used to get the lion's share of the gags.

EB: It seems to me that we tried to give Larry more to do so that he wouldn't just be a stick and Elwood and I wanted to try to make it even, but it was hard to give him more stuff sometimes. But, he was essential to the Stooges. He was as funny as the others and he took his share of the bumps and the bruises and slaps.

CM: Was Shemp a good ad-libber?

EB: Oh, yes. Some of it we couldn't use, like a scene or so when Shemp would be going good on a scene, I'd let the camera roll, and that was a challenge to him and he knew that some of the

stuff we could never use. Some of it got a little bit blue but it was a challenge to him to improvise something, sometimes he would improvise funny stuff that we could use.

CM: Could you give us a few comments about some Three Stooges co-stars starting with their most popular leading lady Christine McIntyre?

EB: Oh, a wonderful woman. She was a real lady and in order to get into the rough neck world of the Stooges she did her best but her lady like quality kind of helped, I think. Now, Hugh McCollum really liked her, I know it may be hard to believe but I think that it was probably platonic. Maybe he might have desired her but his office was right next to mine and I could hear them talking and laughing together, but I'm sure it was platonic.

Now, the way *Micro-Phonies* came about was that he asked me to write a script using her singing talent. He even had her audition for me. We went over to the music scoring stage and the head of the Music department played Voice of Spring and she sang and auditioned for me. I was a pretty new director at the time so I sat down to write the script with Christine McIntyre's singing as the main plot and God knows I was lucky because as a rookie director and a rookie writer I shouldn't have expected to hit a three baser with my first released movie.

CM: Was Christine McIntyre cooperative?

EB: Oh yes, she was a lady, but she did everything that I asked of her and she made a pretty good lady villain. Because of her ladylike quality it was such a contrast to the villain character. She was a very nice lady.

CM: What did you think of Stooge supporting player Vernon Dent?

EB: Wonderful guy, wonderful actor. He was always good at taking tumbles with the other actors.

CM: What was it like to work with Emil Sitka? Unfortunately, he just passed away in January.



Larry, Curly and Moe in *Three Troubledoers* (1946).



Shemp, Larry and Moe in *The Tooth Will Out*. (1951).

EB: I loved working with Emil from the very first day. He was a great actor and he took his share of bumps and bruises along with the rest of them. He was easy to work with and always did his best. You know, we kept in touch through the years by telephone. I'm really going to miss him.

CM: Could you give us a few comments about some of the other Three Stooges directors, starting with Del Lord?

EB: I was the sound man for many, many two-reelers so it gave me a good idea about what I was up against when I directed and actually Del gave me advice and help. He had graduated to B pictures and expected to go up and up, so he gave me advice and he helped with the Stooges. In fact, he told Moe that I would be all right and they shouldn't worry. And when I was writing *Bird in the Hand*, he told me a whole opening sequence that I had was unnecessary. He was very helpful to me.

As a director he was great on gags and so on. But he didn't pay much attention to dialogue. With the Stooges, he didn't have to because they really didn't need directing—they were the Stooges. But occasionally he didn't pay enough attention to dialogue and when he wrote a script the dialogue was terrible! Good writers in silent movies (where he got his start) were dependent on titles. But they usually couldn't write good dialogue. Even as a beginner, I was sure that I could write better dialogue than some of them! That is not pure ego either!

CM: Charlie Chase? What did you think of him?

EB: Oh, a very talented man. I was sound man on several pictures that he directed and acted in and I knew him quite well. Since he was the director as well, he hung around the offices and Hugh McCollum really liked Charlie Chase.

CM: I heard that the Stooges did not like to work with Harry Edwards.

EB: No they didn't. He was a strange case. His career went back to the silents. He must have had something on the ball but he was drinking at the time when I knew him. At the time I came to the short subjects department, he was a very poor director.

I heard that it was the result of drinking, but I never saw any real evidence of it, other than a guy that was inept at directing. He directed a couple of scenes that I wrote and it made me sad to see the gags that I had written so poorly handled.

CM: I read somewhere that Jack White, Jules's brother, when he directed the Stooges, they didn't listen to him, that they just did what they wanted

and he wasn't happy about it.

EB: You know that he went by the name of Preston Black. Well, he was not a very good director or writer.

CM: So you think that he was there mainly because of his brother Jules being in charge of the short subjects department?

EB: Well, sure, after I left Columbia, Jules gave Jack an awful lot of money for rewriting scripts that really didn't need much rewriting. He used a lot of fragments from my pictures and then added new beginnings or new endings. He probably arranged for Jack to get paid for it. Maybe that's what brothers are for. Although Jules wasn't particularly kind to his brother.

CM: What about Jules White?

EB: The Stooges didn't like working with Jules White because he was very arbitrary and didn't give them much of a chance to set their ideas forth. Shemp in particular. He was a very sensitive guy.

Now what Shemp didn't like about working with Jules White was that Jules would show him what to do, which any actor hates. No one wants to be shown. They expect to be told, but to be shown, that's murder. But Jules liked to show actors what to do and Shemp was not the average actor.

CM: What were the circumstances that lead to your leaving Columbia?

EB: Hugh McCollum had a quick temper, which I mentioned before, and he and Jules White did not like each other at all. We had a secretary, Theresa Weissberger, she had black hair and black eyes and she caused McCollum and Jules White to have a big fight and it became like a Western town with two gun fighters and the town (Columbia) wasn't big enough for the two of them. Well, it was a test of who had the best backing. If Cohn had chosen to side with McCollum that would have been it, because Cohn had more power than any of them. But that didn't happen so McCollum was fired in 1952. And that's why I left Columbia. I wasn't getting any more two-reelers to direct and I wasn't getting any features anymore and I had to make a living somehow! So after more than 20 years, I left Columbia.

(continued)



The Three Stooges in *Micro-Phonies*, Ed Bernd's favorite Stoooge film.



Christine McIntyre

CM: After you left Columbia, the short subjects department started cannibalizing earlier pictures as a cost cutting measure. They took scenes from previous shorts and shot some new footage and released them as new pictures. They did this without notifying you and you discovered this by going to see the Stooges short *Fling In The Ring* and seeing scenes that you had directed for *Fright Night*. Could you comment on this?

EB: At first Columbia didn't give me any screen credit but eventually Columbia gave me some credit and paid me a honorarium of \$2500.

Of course Columbia had the right to use my material as long as I got credit for it. Since they had not credited me on the film, they offered me the money. *Fling In The Ring* was peddled as a new picture, but I think they may have used 60% of *Fright Night* and 40% new. But from that point on the studios made sure that credit was given to those who were involved from the beginning.

CM: What was the situation with *Gold Raiders*, a B western/comedy with The Three Stooges and former cowboy star George O'Brien? How did that come about?

EB: A young man by the name of Bernard Glasser—we're friends to this day—he comes to visit me often, right now he is somewhere on a cruise ship sailing from New Zealand. So, we were both scratching for a living in those days but he went into real estate and he is literally now a millionaire!

But, 40 years ago, we were both working to make a living. Bernard Glasser wanted to be a producer, he was very persuasive, even then in 1950. He got acquainted with Moe in the late 40's and they cooked up a deal to make a feature. Moe was kind of jealous of Abbott and Costello and their success with features. Moe wanted Columbia to make a feature and they kept putting him off, so he was ready for the idea of making a feature. They had the right to do it away from Columbia because Columbia had the right of first refusal on it, which they had done.

Anyway, Glasser got the Stooges to agree to work a deal. Glasser had been in the Navy and got well acquainted with George O'Brien, the old western star. Because of World War II and being in the Navy for several years after, he finally came

back to Hollywood and he found that he was no longer a star. Well, Bernie got the Stooges and O'Brien to work for a share of the profits and for very little money up front. And Bernie asked me to direct for minimum director's guild salary and a share of the profits.

He did all this on a shoestring, he borrowed money wherever he could, he was up to his hips in debt, he didn't have much cash so he mortgaged his home to get money and got a lot of people to work on deferments. Anyway, he began to run out of cash about 2 weeks before it was scheduled to go so he had to cut the schedule down to fit the cash that he had. Originally we were had a respectable 14-day shooting schedule but he had to cut it down, until finally he wanted to do it in the 5 days between Christmas and New Years. In the middle of winter! I had to question if he was serious or not. Several times during that process I had wanted to walk out but he pleaded with me, he pleaded that he would go broke, that his children would go hungry, he'd lose his house. Like a damn fool, I did it. The cameraman and everybody just had to sloop their way through. God knows I had to. But we had to do it; and in the five days between Christmas and New Years shot the thing. Have you ever seen it?

CM: For a five day movie it isn't too bad.

EB: What you have said is a pretty nice way to put it because the reviews in *Variety* and the *Reporter* were murderous, absolutely murderous...oh, they attacked me personally. I think in Hollywood there is a syndrome in that people enjoy reading something bad about others. Anyway, it was bad for me because I left Columbia about the time those reviews came out and it killed several promising deals that I had. But nobody back then said, "It's not bad for only 5 days of shooting." I looked at it recently and I expected it to be just horrible, but it wasn't that bad.

CM: It's a typical B Western with the 3 Stooges.

EB: Well, a lot of it is one-take stuff and of course the Stooges were all right in one-take stuff. They could improvise if they forgot a line, they'd just slap somebody. So that was *Gold Raiders*. But like I said, I'm friends to this day with Bernard Glasser. We later did seven films together for Lippert at Twentieth-Century Fox. In fact, he worked a book deal out for me on my autobiography.

Eventually Ben Schwab offered me a position at Allied Artist working on the Bowery Boys features, so everything worked out all right.

CM: You were reunited with the Stooges in 1962 for *The Three Stooges Meet Hercules* and *The Three Stooges in Orbit*. What kind of schedule did you have on *The Three Stooges Meet Hercules*? About 14 days?

EB: Yes, something like that. Do you remember the strong man in the movie? He was a French Canadian who had a real French name but his stage name was Samson Burke. He was big and had muscles but you know, he was afraid of some of the stunts. He was afraid of getting hurt—the big muscle guy was afraid of some of the rough stuff that the Stooges did, like running into a door or a pole and hitting themselves on the head. I'd ask him any number of times to do a stunt where he might get hurt and believe me, despite the big muscles he was apprehensive. He never refused but I could tell that he was a little bit timid.

CM: What was it like to work with the Stooges again after being away for a few years? Were Moe

and Larry their old selves?

EB: Oh yes, it was old times again.

CM: Most people consider *The Three Stooges meet Hercules* to be their best feature film.

EB: Yes, I think its better than *The Three Stooges in Orbit* and I think that its better than the two that Norman Maurer directed (*The Three Stooges Go Around The World In A Daze* and *The Outlaws Is Coming*).

CM: I agree.

EB: He (Norman Maurer) wanted to be a director, he wasn't content to be the producer. Mainly anything I directed I rewrote, touched up, improved and he wasn't able to do that. He thought that he was a good writer, but he was not. And of course as a novice director, he made a lot of mistakes—it's inevitable. I know that I did when I first started.

Elwood Ullman wrote the script for *The Three Stooges Meet Hercules* and he was a good comedy writer. I believe that Norman Maurer shared credit in the story. I'm not sure.

They did some of the chase scenes at Iverson's Ranch in the West San Fernando Valley. Iverson's was a favorite spot. Have you ever been in there? All those crazy rock formations, they were fascinating. I did a Bowery Boys Picture there once; the Boys find uranium and of course they found it on location on the Iverson's Ranch. The bad guys were going to wipe them out and somehow their jeep crashed and blows up with dummies in it, not real actors of course, well, old man Iverson was very protective of everything there. He didn't want one rock changed. He demanded copies of the script so that he could check it and when he got to the part about the jeep and how I was going to construct a track kind of high up that could be concealed from the camera, so I could get a good spectacular crash, he wanted to make sure that nothing would get damaged by the explosion. So I had to make an emergency trip up there to show him just what I was going to do and to promise him that his beloved rock—it was one great big rock actually—would not get damaged. It made a lot more money for him than the sheep ranching that he originally wanted to do.

CM: When you worked on the *Hercules & Orbit* what did you think of Joe DeRita? compared to Curly, Shemp and Joe Besser? Was he easy to work with or was he temperamental?

EB: Oh no! Joe DeRita wasn't a true stooge in that he wasn't whole hearted into it. Curly was, Shemp was, and I never worked with the other one as a Stooge—Joe Besser. I thought that Curly-Joe was kind of grudging and unwilling.

CM: *The Three Stooges in Orbit* started out as a TV pilot and then they ended up reusing the footage in the feature.

EB: That's the basis on which Norman Maurer





Moe, Larry and Curly Joe from a live-action segment of an episode of *The New Three Stooges* cartoon series.

sold the deal. Producers and even executives are kind of hooked on the idea that if they can use stock stuff they can save a lot of money. In many cases it really doesn't save money and hurts the quality of the picture. But what Norman Maurer took to the bosses at Columbia was the idea of using the pilot for about 10% of the pictures. So the scare sequence at the beginning is from the pilot. I really didn't enjoy the outside material in my picture but I had to use it. I didn't have to match anything because most of that was done already in the script.

CM: Was it a difficult shoot?

EB: I had a really hard time when we were making *Orbit*, I had that flying submarine tank. I had a great big crane in order to dip it up and down, you know it was on a cable. The big problem, I hadn't thought about it, I should have because directors should think of everything, but I hadn't thought about the shadows of the crane. So, I tried a number of things and that didn't work, I called an early lunch in order to think it over and I thought that maybe the sun would move around and give us a break. I talked it over with the camera man and with everybody and then Moe came over and made a suggestion and I said, "Oh we thought about that." I may have been a little too short and later I found out that Moe was hurt by my short answer.

Well, in fact, Moe was pretty sensitive. I had unwittingly hurt his feelings and believe me, I went to apologize to him and explained that my mind had been on the crane and made my peace with him and it was fine. Other than that the shooting went well.

CM: What about your work on the live action footage for *The New Three Stooges* cartoon series? What was the deal on that?

EB: Norman Maurer turned it over to me, he was Moe's son in law and married to his daughter Joan and also business manager for the Stooges. A man named Richard Brown had been very successful in animation and Norman had started out as an artist with comic strips and books and he was very much interested in animation too. So the animation producer agreed to make live action and then do the cartoon too. Norman was sup-

posed to hire writers and direct it. He first approached me to write some of them and then discovered that he had better things to do. He was at Columbia at the time and I believe directing a feature picture. Anyway, for some reason he couldn't or didn't want to do the live action with the Stooges, so he gave me the job of writing and directing them.

I turned out about forty of them. They were fragments and I used a lot of the old Stoooge stuff and I wrote all of the live action ones and directed them, very much handicapped by the fact that the industry was very, very busy at the time and we tried to pick up a crew and all the good prop men were working as well as all the good special effects men and Richard wanted to use his animation cameraman, Ed Gillette, for the live action but he was terribly slow because he wasn't familiar with shooting live action and was way out of his depth.

CM: What kind of schedule did you have on them?

EB: As fast as I could shoot them. I ended up doing everything myself. Richard owned Cambria Studio an animation studio. I think that he made a lot of money on the thing. He was supposed to be the producer but he didn't know a thing about it. The assistant director that I had, there was a reason that he was available, I think. assistant directors are usually gung ho guys, but he was, well, I had to do too much of his work too. The prop man was the same story as well as the special effects. I had to do an awful lot of it myself. But, we got them done.

The animation camera man wasn't bad on exteriors but when it came to the interiors using artificial light, it was, oh, my god, half the morning was gone and he didn't have the first shot done, he just didn't know what to do. If we had been able to have an experienced gaffer, then he could have probably done everything that the camera man needed for the lighting, but we didn't even have that. Speaking of gaffers, Columbia had some great ones like Joe Acker. And Columbia always had good lighting. Lots of viewers have noticed that too. Columbia production values were good and that carried over to a certain extent to the two-reelers.

Edward Bernds Three Stooges filmography:

Columbia short subjects with Curly Howard as the third Stoooge:

Micro-Phonies (1945)
A Bird In the Head (1946)
Three Troubledoers (1946)
Monkey Businessmen (1946)
Three Little Pirates (1946)

With Shemp Howard as the third Stoooge:

Fright Night (1947)
Out West (1947)
Brideless Groom (1947)
Pardon My Clutch (1948)
Squareheads of the Round Table (1948)
The Hot Scots (1948)
Mummy's Dummies (1948)
Crime On Their Hands (1948)
Who Done It? (1949)
Fuelin' Around (1949)
Vagabond Loafers (1949)
Punchy Cowpunchers (1950)
Dopey Dicks (1950)
Studio Stoops (1950)
A Snitch In Time (1950)
Three Arabian Nuts (1951)
Merry Mavericks (1951)
The Tooth Will Out (1951)
Listen Judge (1952)
Gents In a Jam (1952)

Feature Films with the Stooges:

Gold Raiders (1951) with Moe Howard, Larry Fine and Shemp Howard.
The Three Stooges Meet Hercules (1962) with Moe Howard, Larry Fine and Curly-Joe DeRita.
The Three Stooges In Orbit (1962) with Moe Howard, Larry Fine and Curly-Joe DeRita.

Ed Bernds also directed 40 live action segments for *The New Three Stooges* cartoon series in 1965.

It was kind of a nightmare making *The New Three Stooges* with one of the most inept crews I have ever had but we staggered through it. Did you ever see any of them?

CM: I saw them when I was a kid and I saw them recently. They're not bad, they're kind of goofy.

EB: The Stooges are still the Stooges. The agony I felt working with the poor prop man and special effects man doesn't show.

CM: What were your favorite Three Stooges films that you directed?

EB: I like *Micro-Phonies* (1945) the best and *Squareheads of the Round Table* (1948). Like I mentioned before, Leonard Maltin also considered *Micro-Phonies* to be one of my best. But the public and several other critics consider *Brideless Groom* (1947) to be one of my best. Someone wrote that it was high speed comedy and laughs from beginning to end.

(Note: Mr. Bernds was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures on February 9, 1998 for his work in sound.)■

JAPANESE EROTICA:

A Woman Called Sada Abe and Wife To Be Sacrificed Have American Premiere.

by Gino Colbert

It once was that East was East, while West was strictly West. It was further expressed that the twain would never meet. Internet enthusiasts might counter that the two have met and blended in cyberspace, and it's now a one-world order. No more mysteries of the Exotic East.

But there are still some unsolved mysteries of the East, among them the adult films produced by Nikkatsu Studios of Japan in the 1970s. These films have rarely been seen outside of Japan, and there was never anything quite like them ever produced in the United States. Only now, after a 20 year duration, will these exceptional films be receiving an American theatrical release. We think it's long overdue.

Significant as Japan's oldest film studio (Nikkatsu was founded in 1912), they became known for a wide range of productions including comedies, yakuza thrillers and even an occasional sci-fi/monster epic such as *Monster From a Prehistoric Planet* (1967). By the late 1960s, Nikkatsu was being severely hit by the effects of television. To



Classic Nikkatsu logos and (far right) their current logo.

lure audiences back into the theaters, the studio segued into adult sex-themed films. The move proved to be a success and, in the '70s, Nikkatsu went on to define and dominate a trend it had unwillingly initiated: the Roman Porno Eiga (Romantic Pornographic films).

These Japanese films would hardly be considered pornographic by American standards, then or now. No male or female genitals were ever shown on-screen, and sex was simulated, and thus soft-core—again by American legal definitions. But the sex erupted with passionate intensity, appearing as a logical development in the (usually) well crafted stories of love, betrayal, sadness and revenge. Most human emotions and motivations were generally beyond the requirements or abilities of any American adult film producers of that same time period, where graphic sexual intercourse was the only necessity.

The best of the Nikkatsu films gave the viewer a realistic mix of good-girls and bad-girls, whereas the American adult films usually took the easy way out by depicting nothing beyond unending free-for-alls of naughty nurses/waitresses/stewardesses eager to get naked and party.

At Nikkatsu, the cross-purposes of plot became interwoven and Freudian, as in *Flower and Snake* (1974) where a dominating mother goads her meek son and assists him in kidnapping and torturing various women. Japan has made an art of bondage, and it's no surprise that many of the Nikkatsu tales became exhibitions of bondage and punishment.

One of the great exceptions is their 1975 classic, *A Woman Called Sada Abe: Beyond The Realm of the Senses*, directed by Noboru Tanaka. It is no coincidence that this will be the first of the films making an American theatrical premiere, to be distributed by Phaedra Cinema. "This is really Tanaka's masterpiece," states Greg Hatanaka, president of Phaedra. "This is a true life story of Sada Abe, a woman who has a sado-sex marathon which culminates in her slicing off her lover's penis." One wonders if this inspired the much later John Wayne Bobbitt incident? It certainly inspired an event in filmmaking, when director Nagisa Oshima remade the Sada Abe story the following year (1976), to have it eclipse Tanaka's original film and go on to international fame under the title of *In The Realm of the Senses*. "Junko Miyashita is the actress who plays the part of Sada Abe," says Greg. "She did other films at Nikkatsu, but this one is usually considered to be her most challenging role. She gives an incredible dramatic performance."

If *A Woman Called Sada Abe* soft-pedals the bondage angle, this is more than made up for in another film, *Wife To Be Sacrificed*. The two films will generally appear around the United States paired on a double-bill, allowing audiences to see the best Nikkatsu had to offer in one showing. Originally released on October 26, 1974, *Wife To Be Sacrificed* is often cited as the most superlative film role of its star, Miss Naomi Tani. It was her third film for Nikkatsu, her second with director Masaru Onuma, and 78 minutes of accelerating immersion into the world of bondage and submission.

Few actresses could persuade an audience to share her rage, arousal and ultimate acceptance of the captivity and physical sensations she endures. At the films start she is appalled by the situation her estranged husband has forced upon her. At the conclusion of the film, policemen find the



Junko Miyashita and Hideaki Ezumi in *A Woman Called Sada Abe*.

woman tied naked and helpless on the floor of an abandoned house. One of the officers is untying her when she admonishes him, "Please don't. I prefer it this way." Fade out.

And by the raw force of Naomi's dynamic, intimate performance the viewer will not doubt the reality of this woman's new arousal and orien-

tation. Few actresses could match the conviction and intensity which Miss Tani lavishes upon the role. At only twenty-six years of age, she gives one of the most impassioned performances of the Asian screen. She went on to star in over 20 films (she made five other films for director Masaru Onuma)

(continued)

but she quite possibly reached her zenith with *Wife to Be Sacrificed*.

This film may also go down in history as the supreme achievement of its director. In his all-inclusive volume *Japanese Cinema: The Essential Handbook*, Thomas Weisser states of this film, "The early sado films of Masaru Konuma are well scripted, stylishly directed, and singularly harrowing. This one is probably his best."

The wide-screen ratio is used to brilliant effect, camera placement is artfully planned, and many shots resemble beautiful paintings in their richness of color, relation of subject to background, etc. There is seldom any violent action on-screen, and the subjugation of the Wife is a surprisingly gentle progression. Japanese film authority Guy Tucker has noted, "The Japanese filmmakers seem to find a beauty and serenity in these situations. On the other hand, the Europeans would tell the same story with blood and violence."

What will American moviegoers have to say about these films? Until now their chances to see them have been few indeed! In May of this year the films will begin appearing in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and other major cities. Our next issue will have complete details. ■



Naomi Tani Interviewed

by Michael Copner
(Translation by Kaz Tanaka
and Emiko Tanaka)

Exotic, fresh, and young. Innocent, yet regal and sophisticated. The qualities possessed by actress Naomi Tani launched her to the heights of superstardom in Japan's erotic cinema in the 1970s. Miss Tani now lists only 22 titles on her official filmography, although there are a few early independent productions whose titles have faded into obscurity. She lists her best as being a 1976 feature directed by Masaru Onuma, entitled *Kashinno Irezumi-Nureta Tubo* (*Tattooed Flower, Wet Vase*). Many of her films are completely unknown outside of Japan. Several titles have been available to video collectors in America—films such as *Flower and Snake* and *Wife To Be Sacrificed* (both directed by Masaru Onuma for Nikkatsu Studios in 1974.)

With several of Miss Tani's classic Japanese erotic films from the '70s at last slated for American theatrical release we thought it was time to interview her on the subject of her life and career. Retired from motion pictures, but still active as owner and operator of her own cocktail lounge in Tokyo (known affectionately as Big Tani's Place), Naomi Tani graciously engaged in the following exchange.

Cult Movies: How did you come to work in motion pictures?

Naomi Tani: I attracted the attention of a scout from an independent filmmaker who wanted me to appear in their films. I made my debut in their film, *Roppow Eiga Special*. I went on to make many films for this company.

When I started to have a desire for fame in this field, it was arranged that I should work for Nikkatsu Studios, where I felt I would be able to find my own special roles. The first film I did for them was in 1972, and only featured me in a small part. I got a chance to make my leading actress



Naomi Tani and Terumi Azuma in *Wife To Be Sacrificed*.

debut in my second film for Nikkatsu, which was called *Flower and Snake*. It was authored by Oniroku Dan. I was a perfect actress for Dan's image, such as a great look with the rope, strong features, white smooth skin, long straight black hair. A kimono sits well on me, also.

CM: We've heard that Nikkatsu had a training school for their actors and actresses. Who taught the classes and how long did they last?

NT: I didn't go to any training school. I liked to see many different shows, so I learned many things from them. I had my theatrical company, Gekidan Naomi, and I asked many instructors to come see our shows, and learned from them that way.

CM: In America there's a strange "double standard" whereby talent in adult films may be looked down on, yet some of them have gone on to find success in show business as musicians, comedians, actors, etc. What is the attitude in Japan toward people in adult films?

NT: At the time of my performances, there were not actual scenes of sexual intercourse in the movies. I was just like any other actress performing for a fiction movie. People were not prejudiced, and everybody was very nice to me. But, I didn't agree to appear in the movie if I didn't get a clear idea about the story, and some people criticized that I was a stubborn actress. I worked very hard for my own theatrical company and my movies; I never gave up in the middle of shooting, therefore people knew I was a serious person and trusted actress. I believe if people work hard in their field they have success and high regard from their contemporaries.

I did work outside the motion picture field. During that same time I did guest appearances on many TV shows, and was featured regularly on *Playgirl*, a sexy drama on television.

CM: We've heard that the ropes used in the films had to be tied a certain way by an expert so they would not cause injury.

NT: The specialist was called "Kinpakushi." Before they tie people, they make the rope very soft by boiling and squeezing it. The ropes look rough and straw-like but they are very soft, almost like silk. They made the bonds very carefully and never hurt my skin.

CM: What do you think of the adult films made today?

NT: Rarely do I see the new films. I think that the actresses are very beautiful and better looking in the present day films, however the films themselves have lost the romantic feeling that our films in the 1970s had.

CM: Did you have any favorite directors on your films?

NT: Everybody was wonderful to work with. I especially liked director Masaru Onuma, who I believe understood me personally. There were excellent staffs and directors in the Nikkatsu Company.

CM: How about favorite actors in the Japanese films?

NT: I didn't have any favorite actor who worked with me. I admired Mr. Yujirou Ishihara's capacity for tolerance by seeing his movies.

CM: There was an actress named Yoko Tani working in the international cinema in the 1960s. Any relation?

NT: I never heard about the person. I don't know who she is.

CM: Could you describe a typical day of pro-



Original poster artwork for *Wife To Be Sacrificed*.

duction for Nikkatsu, such as rehearsals, costume, actual shooting and so on.

NT: After I received the script, the director and I would have a meeting and go over the scenes until we both had an understanding for the movie. During those meetings I'd decide whether or not I wanted to be in the film. After I would decide to play the part, I had a costume fitting. We would shoot for two to four weeks without rehearsal. Actually, I didn't need a long time for costume and make-up.

CM: Is there a Naomi Tani fan club we could join?

NT: I don't have an established fan club. Sometimes the monthly magazine "Bubka" will run a special issue about me.

CM: Could you share any outstanding memories of your filmmaking career?

NT: I have many memories and one of the most interesting was when we shot a scene of burning

hot candle wax on my skin. I was asking to have them use a substitute actress to stand in for me, since I'd already had an experience getting my skin blistered from a candle. The marks from a whip and rope could vanish after a while, but the mark from a wax blister stays on my skin. The director brought in a substitute actress but he didn't like the quality of her skin. He called me back to shoot the scene. After we finished filming, all the staff gave me a massage with lemon and ice water. That was an unforgettable experience.

CM: Do you have any advice or observations for movie makers today?

NT: I have noticed that the movie producers are spending more money and time than ever before, which is good. I think they are supposed to express Japanese identity through their films, such as duty, love and devotion. I want to see really Japanese movies.

The Duke Goes East: A Look at The Barbarian and the Geisha



by Sachi Yamada

Forget *The Green Berets*. Forget *The Conqueror*. The good movie where John Wayne encounters the East is John Huston's *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (1958). You wouldn't know how good the film is from the Movie Guides.

Here are two prominent examples. Leonard Maltin: "Miscasting of Wayne is ludicrous, throwing costumer amuck." Steven H. Scheuer: "Confused historical drama."

I've always liked the movie and couldn't understand why so many critics dumped on it. They wanted someone to blame and it sure wasn't going to be director Huston, not when they had another John to attack. Maybe the critics were only hostile because John Wayne was playing a different kind of role.

Someone who agrees that Wayne turned in a good performance in a good film is Sachi Yamada, an engineering student who lives in La La Land with the rest of us. Having spent the first half of her life in Japan, she has the ideal background to judge a film where East meets West.

(Sachi and I are currently working on a collaboration about her father's work in Japan where he was involved with merchandising toys based on the one and only Gamera!)

—Brad Linaweaver

Those who know anything about Japanese history and culture are constantly offended by the ludicrous way Hollywood often depicts Japan. Not just seemingly minor sins, such as costumes from the wrong period (or the wrong country!), nightmarish hairdos, or ghostly paper-white makeup on all the women. Even if one's only knowledge of Japan were the names of automobiles, still one must have noticed that Hollywood Japanese just don't behave like ordinary human beings.

In the miniseries, *Shogun*, for one particularly awful example, the Japanese act upon exotic prejudice and bizarre, ancient customs that Westerners can never understand! So I was delighted to be introduced to a wonderful exception to this kind of approach: *The Barbarian and the Geisha*, directed by John Huston and starring John Wayne, Yamamura So, Ando Eiko and Sam Jaffe.

Huston's extensive research for this movie, set in 1856, is unexpected and astonishing; he pays attention to the smallest details. The costumes worn by different classes of people are all correctly distinguished. When Japanese characters speak among themselves, they have relevant conversa-

tion and speak correct Japanese, down to the proper accent and vocabulary according to class and sex, even when the conversation remains untranslated.

(A peasant farmer in the 1800s spoke very different Japanese from a high ranking Samurai; but one would never guess that from the vast majority of Japloitation movies.)

The most impressive example of realism occurs when a royal clerk reads from a scroll containing the itinerary of Harris's visit to Tokugawa Iyesada, the child shogun whose guardian actually rules Japan at the time.

The clerk could have held up a Chinese-banquet menu, and nobody but well educated Japanese would have noticed. But not only does the scroll show the correct items, they're written in an almost obsolete, old-fashion Kanji that few Japanese today can even read.

The location shots are all authentically Japanese, and most of the characters are played by Japanese-Japanese, not Japanese-Americans! John Wayne is perfectly cast as Townsend Harris, the first American consul to Japan. Although Wayne's acting in *The Barbarian and the Geisha* has been unfairly criticized as hamfisted or "cowboyish," in reality, his intimidating yet gentle personality is essential to the movie.

In 1856, when Townsend Harris put ashore in the small Japanese port of Shimoda, Japan was in turmoil. In the early 1600s, the third Tokugawa Shogun, Iyemitsu, had forbidden all international trading except for very limited contact between Portugal and Holland and the city of Nagasaki. By the time Commodore Perry steamed into Uraga in 1853, Japan had enjoyed virtual isolation for two hundred and thirty years. The sense of security and superiority was utterly shattered when Perry's five steam-powered warships arrived from the West. When Consul Harris arrived three years later, he insisted, on behalf of the United States, that Japan open itself to the world; but he could not understand what a wrenching change that meant.

The Tokugawa clan of the 1830s had completely





dominated Japan for a quarter of a millennium, completely eclipsing the emperor. This stability, which had ended centuries of civil war, ultimately depended upon keeping all the other clans relatively poor, so they would never have enough military power to conspire against the Tokugawa.

The clan realized that by opening the country, as Harris demanded — thus exposing the Japanese people to foreign culture and especially to new technology — Tokugawa would lose its grip on the many small but powerful clans all over Japan. The child Shogun's "guardian" realized that opening the country was a terribly explosive choice; but so was isolation: by 1856, Tokugawa still had no foreign policy whatsoever. Harris landed and the fuse was lit.

Towering Townsend Harris must have terrified and overwhelmed the villagers in Shimoda, where they had never seen a "hairy foreigner," and where the average height of an adult male was barely five feet. Wayne's tall, muscular figure is perfect as he dwarfs his Japanese hosts.

The governor of Shimoda (Saimon-no-kami) is of the family Tamura, hence Governor Tamura. He is played very well by So Yamamura as a man desperately trying to keep his dignity in the face of another man who makes him look almost child-sized. He blusters, ordering Harris to leave Shimoda immediately. But Harris, like Wayne himself, is not the kind of man to take no for an answer. He demands to meet the Shogun and negotiate a treaty.

A low ranking governor of a small fishing county cannot possibly recognize Harris as a diplomat, so while waiting for instructions from his overlord in Edo (Tokyo), and ultimately from Tokugawa, he sends the beautiful geisha, Okichi (Ando Eiko) to entertain Harris ... and to spy on him.

Okichi does not act like a stereotypical "silly Oriental woman." It is clear that director Huston understands the role of the geisha in Japanese society. Westerners often mistakenly believe that a geisha is a prostitute. Actually, she is a highly

trained entertainer who must be able to dance, sing, play several musical instruments, hold intelligent conversation with her clients — and often, as with Okichi, engage in political intrigue and even espionage.

Ando's Okichi certainly comes across as a very intelligent woman, fully believable as a geisha skilled enough to be sent by the governor on such a vital mission. Still, Okichi is of her time and place. She may know her role, but Harris does not know his. He confuses her by telling her to look up, not to bow, not to act subservient: no man has ever asked her to do that before; but then, Harris is no ordinary man. He respects her as an individual person and as a woman, not as a geisha.

The scenes between them are so delicate, it's amazing that any non-Japanese director could get it so right. From the moment Okichi meets Harris, her entire world is upended, setting the stage for the tragic but inevitable ending for the barbarian and the geisha — as well as the governor, and for all Japan.

Wayne's brassy Americanism is the trump of doom for a seventeenth century culture that cannot survive the clash with a nineteenth century world. While the Shogun dilly dallies, uncertain whether even to meet with Harris (a bad habit the Japanese government still indulges in today), the consul spends months in Shimoda gaining the governor's friendship, the respect of the villagers and Okichi's love.

During Harris's stay, a plague ship sails into the harbor. Some sailors jump ship and spread Typhoid through the village. Harris and his Dutch translator, Mr. Houston (Sam Jaffe's grammatically correct Japanese is surprisingly realistic), use the modern Western techniques of quarantining infected patients and burning their possessions to save Shimoda from the Typhoid plague. The villagers, who had never seen an epidemic before, change from contempt toward Harris almost to divine awe. This event also changes the attitude of the villagers toward Okichi who had been looked

at as a traitor by farmers and fishermen ignorant of her true mission.

A century and a half ago, a poor family with many daughters had very few options: either the parents killed their infant girls at birth, or they could sell them to a geisha house. But for a woman to earn that exciting life, she also had to find a patron, a rich and powerful man who would sponsor her expensive training. In exchange, she was as loyal as a samurai to her mentor, in a culture where honor and face were, quite literally, everything. A geisha would throw herself off a cliff rather than betray her sponsor.

But Okichi begins to fall in love with the American, though she cannot admit it — to Harris or even to herself. She is torn between awe of the gentle barbarian, the buried passion he inadvertently fans, and her sense of duty to her mentor who sponsored her from a bleak future to the life of a court geisha. In the end, although the child Shogun and his guardian have not yet decided what to do with Harris, the overlord decides to act on his own, without authorization: he orders Tamura to kill the American consul and the governor in turn orders Okichi to betray Harris to him, marking his room so that her mentor can kill him while he's staying at a Tokugawa palace guest house in Edo.

But Okichi has already been infected with Westernism and she cannot obey. Instead, she marks her own room, offering her own life instead. That night, the governor enters the guest house, intending to kill Harris. But when he sees his geisha Okichi instead, he understands the decision she has made.

He makes his own, the only decision a samurai could make under the circumstances.

Huston's insight into the nuances of Japanese culture is remarkably accurate; no other ending is possible. Unfortunately, it sailed right over the heads of American movie critics. But then, knowledge of Japanese culture (or even human nature) is not their long suit.

The movie ends, but the historical Harris stayed in Japan several more years. The treaty was signed, and indeed it spelled the beginning of the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate: sporadic clan wars swept Japan for several years as families fought for power. Japan began reluctantly to drag itself into the modern age, instituting a parliament, social and economic reforms, and sweeping away the "samurai era." Just as the Tokugawa feared, Western influence spread through Japan like Typhoid from the plague ship. The very existence of Townsend Harris had killed the old Japan. ■





Reviewed by John Soister

When I decided to review the Universal Studios saga of Kharis, I knew I wanted to do it in a thoroughly professional manner. So I went out and bought some brewskis and a couple of cubic yards of popcorn, and settled down to watch the films, in sequence, twice. About midway through *The Mummy's Ghost*, my brother Bill showed up, and he stuck around until *The Mummy's Hand* had unreeled the second time. An uncompromising Hammer fan, Bill didn't shut up once during the Chaney's; a number of times I had to swat him so I could hear the dialogue through his sarcastic commentary. When we got to *Hand*, however, he became noticeably silent. Even during the non-Kharis footage, my Hammer-crazed sibling scarcely opened his mouth. He cringed at the thought of watching Lon Chaney's first follow-up, but conceded that *The Mummy's Hand* was almost worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as Hammer's 1959 color remake, which had, of course, borrowed so heavily from the 1940 picture. Knowing my brother as I do, I was impressed. The first Kharis film has always been one of my favorite horror movies, and I took his admi-

ration as vindication of my own good taste.

A couple of weeks after I first got a 16mm print of *The Mummy's Hand* (this was back in 1978), artist and Great White Way raconteur Al Kilgore admitted to me that he had seen the film when it was first

released and that it had scared the living hell out of him. I found that hard to believe, but he swore that he and half the theater had jumped a couple of feet in the air when Tom Tyler sat up and choked the bejesus out of Charles Trowbridge. Everyone had been primed for another tale of rejuvenation like the original Karloff film, he explained, and the sight of that bandaged, black-eyed horror reaching out to force death down your throat was an unexpected and nerve blasting experience. A decade or so later, I picked up a copy of Leslie Halliwell's volume, *The Dead That Walk*, and read that the author had also run into "many people [who] remember it as the most frightening film they have ever seen." That so many folks, under a variety of circumstances, had had such powerful memories of the impact of *The Mummy's Hand* was a sobering thought. I don't know of anyone who has felt even remotely the same way about the Chaney sequels.

The Mummy's Hand is by far the most effective film of director Christy Cabanne's I've ever encountered, and I've seen three of them. (1934's *Jane Eyre*, shot at Monogram with Colin Clive and Virginia Bruce was quite good. I also saw and kind of enjoyed *Scared to Death*.) Cabanne's background in Westerns helped him adapt the material at hand to his vision (resulting in that spunky, if gratuitous barroom brawl scene in downtown Cairo), and he must have felt right at home with all those six-shooters and carbines helping to keep the noise levels up. Nevertheless, the veteran director created a work which may have lacked the sophistication of the 1932 original, but which kept the '40s matinee crowds and the younger set glued to their seats (when they weren't a couple of feet above them).

In writing their screenplay, Griffin Jay and Maxwell Shane molded Shane's original story about Kharis and Ananka, the curiously steadfast high priests of Karnak, and those enigmatic tana leaves, into a format more suitable to the camera. Entrusted with only \$80,000 (thus saith the book *Universal Horrors*), producer Ben Pivar had his scenarists find ways to milk footage from 1932's *The Mummy* for their streamlined revamping of one of Karloff's greatest films. Art director Jack Otterson was instructed to scout out nearby locales (thus explaining why those woods which surround the temple in the Sahara contain Egyptian elm trees), and to scrounge among the cast-



SNIPES

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offs and leftovers from earlier pictures.

The production team did its job wisely (and cheaply) and well. Props and scenery were purloined from Karl Freund's moody mummy masterpiece as well as from James Whales' loopy bomb, *Green Hell*. Cinematographer Woody Bredell shot some inserts of Tom Tyler in Egyptian garb and perfectly married them to the scene where Boris Karloff's Imhotep had been caught with his hand in the till. This seamless concoction served as the flashback sequence wherein new priests of Karnak (in later films Arkhon).

Top-billed in the film is Dick Foran, and the big fellow just exudes boy-next-door charm. As an archaeologist he is a credible blend of scientific zeal and common sense.

Foran's side-kick on the archaeological expedition is enacted by Wallace Ford, one of Hollywood's best-liked character men. Ford was something of a genre veteran by the time *The Mummy's Hand* went before the cameras; during the previous decade, when he had been the leading man in any number of potboilers and whodunits, Ford had matched with Bela Lugosi in Columbia's *Night of Terror* (1933) and Monogram's *Mysterious Mister Wong* (1935). Earlier, he had also been the nominal lead in Tod Browning's wild, unsettling *Freaks*, over at MGM (1932). Whether as the hero or as the hero's best pal, Ford came across as brash (without being obnoxious), wary (without being cowardly), and totally dependable when the chips were down.

Peggy Moran and perennial pixie Cecil Kellaway make quite a team, too. Miss Moran's participation in Universal's slick forties' product was curtailed after she married Henry Koster, one of the crowd of German emigres beckoned to Hollywood by the Laemmles in the mid-thirties. Both here and in *Horror Island* (where she again played opposite Dick Foran), Peggy Moran essays a savvy and cynical young woman. That she manages to pull off a couple of potentially hard-edged characters without yielding an inch of her femininity is a measure of Miss Moran's talent and personality.

Everybody's favorite Irishman, Cecil Kellaway was born in South America. He seemed, from the

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Original story by Griffin Jay

Screenplay by MAXWELL SHANE and GRIFFIN JAY

Directed by CHRISTY CABANNE • Associate Producer: BEN PIVAR

A UNIVERSAL PICTURE

moment he set foot in the States in 1939, destined to grace only big, prestige productions; a casual glance at the jovial Mr. Kellaway's film credits shows *The Mummy's Hand* among the extreme lower end of his career accomplishments.

Every commentary I've read about Tom Tyler's Kharis focuses on the ex-cowboy star's arthritis; all he had to do was slightly exaggerate his condition, the critics proclaim, and—Voila!—instant Mummy. This wholesale dismissal of the actor's voluntary contribution to the role is distressing. Tyler's Kharis has a baleful, genuinely scary presence due to any number of factors—arthritis not being one of them—that were not or couldn't be duplicated when Chaney submitted to the gauze for the sequels. Perhaps it was the novelty of the situation, or the restraint with which Christy Cabanne used the Mummy, or the actor's lean, mean bearing. A plus often mentioned is the opti-

cal eradication of Kharis' eyes, a move which leaves the undead prince glaring daggers with black pools of nothingness. In what may sound like a contradiction in terms, Tyler's lack of mimed reaction to instructions or other situations makes his Kharis far more implacable and unnerving than Chaney's mummy, who would mug, shrug, and wiggle at the slightest provocation in order to "act" while a mute prisoner to the bandages.

I'm not certain why the rugged Tyler wasn't tapped for any of the sequels; maybe once in the dusty rig had been enough for him, or the debilitating disease had progressed too far to allow any subtlety in his movement. Most likely, the casting would have run contrary to Universal's insistence on exploiting "The Screen's Master Character Creator" in an endless series of bizarre and derivative make-ups.

(continued)



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With Kharis, the Mummy persona which had been so carefully delineated by Freund and Karloff almost a decade earlier, was now reduced to a silent Angel of Death. Kharis would have no resilient alter-ego to mastermind the events leading to death and destruction, as Imhotep had done as Ardath Bey. Wisely, Griffin Jay (who wrote the original story) split the character into separate halves, and, henceforth, the movers and shakers in the ongoing saga would be the high priests of Karnak. Although the sacerdotal line supposedly extended back as far as the doomed prince himself, never would there be a zealot so glib or so gleeful in his chosen line of work than George Zucco's character of Andoheb. Willy, deceitful and not a little oily, Andoheb manipulates Kharis with the same certainty with which Zucco steals the picture.

Andoheb has his gentle and solicitous side: he addresses Eduardo Ciannelli's high priest as "father," and tenders a tentative touch to the old man's arm. More frequently, though, he's cheerfully cold-blooded. Though it may be a dramatic convenience that he should fall for the leading lady (thus triggering a pattern which every successive high priest will follow), Zucco imbues the lunatic "courtship" with a tad of pathos and a whole lot of technique. Only John Carradine comes close to shaving the ham with anything like the expertise of old George.

One might question what peculiar appeal the plight of Kharis and Ananka had to the ancient gods of Egypt. Why, out of the countless royal tombs which pocked the Valleys of the Kings and Queens or the Hill Of The Seven Jackals, did Isis, Osiris, and Amon-Ra chose to station an undead guardian (and a host of sacerdotal back-ups) only here? One might also question the incredible string of bad luck experienced by King Amenophis. Of all the pharaohs of all the dynasties in the Twin Kingdom, only Amenophis had two daughters (Anck-es-en-Amon and Ananka) who were snatched from him by untimely death. Also, two frustrated, potential sons-in-law (Imhotep and Kharis) whom he was forced to bury alive for their sacrilege.

The Mummy's Hand no longer has the power to frighten that it once had, but it hasn't lost its power to fascinate. The mummy was the first of the thirties' classic monsters to be accorded a bit of forties' verve and polish, and, in this initial outing, the results were admirable. The wisdom of keeping the bandaged menace offscreen for a good bit of the story would be abandoned in subsequent installments, giving the one-note goblin far too much opportunity to wear out his welcome. But here, in this first of the Kharis/Ananka tales, the freshness of the theme combined with a wonderful cast and an on-target production staff to produce a tight and fast-moving film. The film holds its own with any of Universal's comparable genre efforts during the war years, and it still holds up well today. ■



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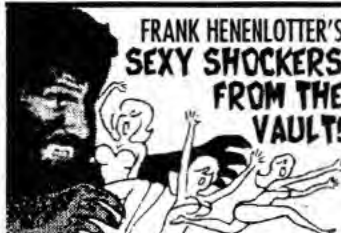
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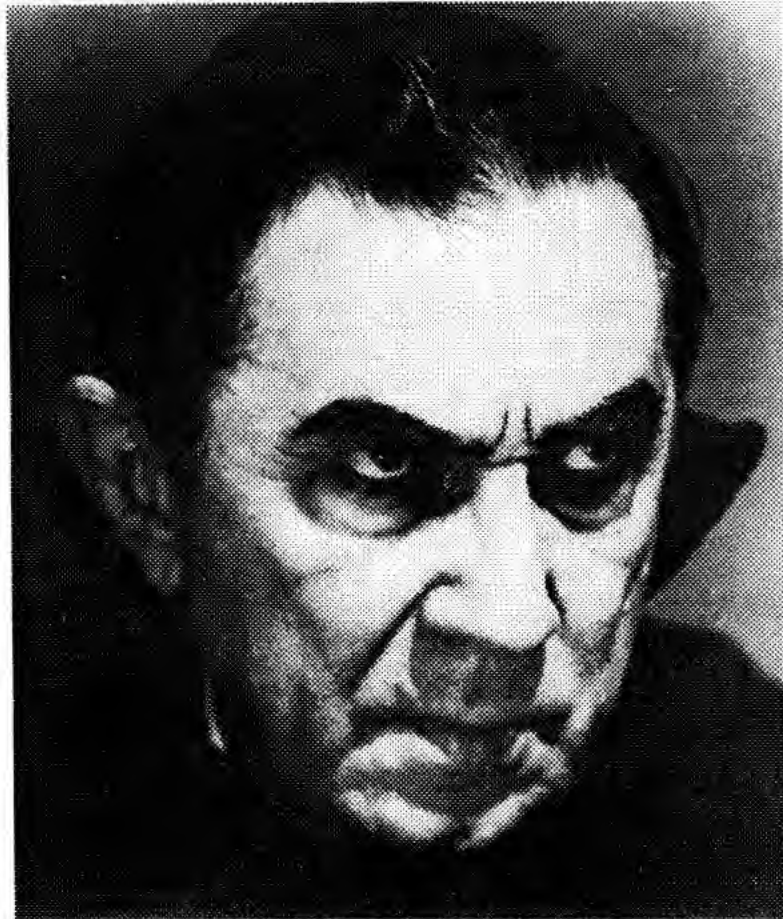
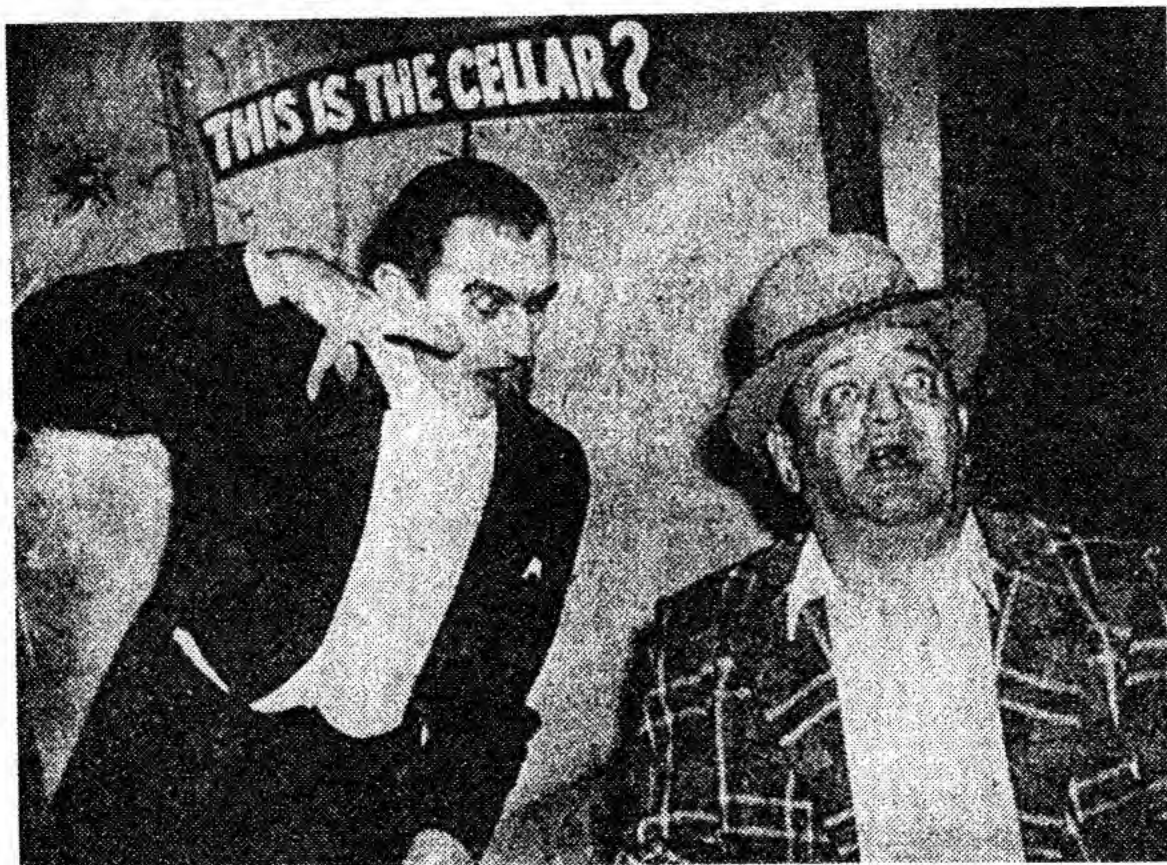
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VISA & MASTERCARD ACCEPTED!

Vampires in Vegas



Ghost With The Most, Man! — All set (and will he be surprised!) to challenge comedian Hank Henry for the masterminding of the zombies and werewolves Las Vegas-way, is "Dracula," none other than movie star Bela Lugosi, opening at the Silver Slipper, Last Frontier Village, Friday night (Feb 19), costarring with howlacious Hank in "The Bela Lugosi Revue," and featuring "The Girl in the Champagne Glass."

—Original caption that ran under the photo at left in the Feb 13, 1954 edition of the Las Vegas Sun.

by Mike Weatherford

Any self-respecting vampire buff knows Las Vegas became part of horror history with *The Night Stalker*. Intrepid reporter Carl Kolchak (Darrin McGavin) thrilled a record-sized TV audience in 1972, as he flushed out a vampire who could stroll far too easily amid the gaunt, pasty-faced gamblers who lumber around like zombies in a city that never sleeps.

Far less known, however, is that two significant figures in monster moviedom—no less than Bela Lugosi himself and TV hostess Vampira—each had their names up in lights on the Las Vegas Strip a good 15 years before Janos Skorzeny (Barry Atwater) claimed it as a happy hunting ground. It gives new meaning to all those clichés about Vegas as an entertainment graveyard.

Lugosi's turn came as the star of a burlesque comedy at the Silver Slipper Saloon in February of 1954. Vampira's brief showroom fame was a bit more typical of what we think of as a "Vegas" revue: She was Liberace's showroom guest star at the Riviera two years later, in April of 1956.

Lugosi's trip to Vegas was one of the parade of events marking



Starring
DRACULA
(HIMSELF)
BELA LUGOSI
and
HANK HENRY
with
SPARKY KATE • JIMMY CAYNE
DILL WILLARD • VIRGINIA HILL
JOAN WHITE
BROWN REIDMAN and HIS ORCHESTRA
Extra Added Attraction
TERRY SHEEHAN
"THE GIRL IN THE
CHAMPAGNE GLASS"
SILVER SLIPPER
LAST FRONTIER VILLAGE
FREE PARKING • NO COVER



Katharine Hillyer noted in their 1955 book, *Las Vegas: Playtown U.S.A.*—"In Las Vegas all paging is done by loud-speaker, and it is not at all uncommon to hear 'Paging Mr. Walt Disney, Paging Mr. Walt Disney' echoing for miles around." He may have well been phoning back ideas for Frontierland!

The heart of the village was The Silver Slipper. It was—as Katharine and Katharine also pointed out—"a reproduction of a Gay Nineties Barbary Coast establishment and keeps its customers happy between gambling urges by presenting those two indestructible comedians, Hank Henry and Slapsie Maxie Rosenboom, various strip-tease acts, and the country's most venerable songsters."

In 1950, Fox coaxed longtime burlesque second-banana Henry to Las Vegas to star in melodramas such as "Revenge of the Klondikes," with Henry vamping in drag as Little Nell. A half-dozen actors worked above a five-piece band on a stage that was "pretty much on top of the bar," says Bill Willard, an actor and writer for the group.

After four years, Fox had started to book name acts to give the productions fresh doses of momentum and publicity. Willard says he isn't sure how Lugosi ended up in the show, but speculates that Fox—who was part of the dance team of Chaney & Fox before working at the Del Mar Hotel in California—contacted the horror star through a friend at the William Morris Agency. By the time Lugosi was hired, Willard and Henry were used to banging out quick scripts that recycled old bur-

(continued)

the final two years of his life. "A bad Hollywood marriage left him broke and mentally disturbed. His movie career was over and he was so grateful to work here," said Eddie Fox in 1976, the promoter who brought him to town. Fox was a bit dismissive (or perhaps completely unaware) of Lugosi's subsequent Ed Wood movies, but the actor did take the Vegas job a few months after Lillian Lugosi won a divorce and custody of their son Bela, Jr.

The Silver Slipper Saloon was part of the Last Frontier, which in 1941 was the second resort to venture away from downtown and settle on the dusty Hwy. 91 to Los Angeles. This chance to enjoy "The Early West in Modern Splendor" was not only a precursor to today's themed hotels but also to Disneyland. In 1947 the resort added the Last Frontier Village, which included a mining train, jail and artifacts imported from frontier towns. No wonder—as Katharine Best and



Ghost Meets Host—Little do comedian Hank Henry (r) and smiling Jimmy Cavanaugh realize that master zombie tamer, Bela Lugosi, is back to his "Dracula" tricks in this hilarious scene from "The Bela Lugosi Revue," now in its third week at the Silver Slipper, Last Frontier Village.



Bela Lugosi, *Esquire*—Stepping out of his role of menace to prove that he's really human (and a very attractive one!) is "Dracula," star of *The Bela Lugosi Revue*, satirical chiller now in its seventh week at the Silver Slipper, Last Frontier Village.

lesque routines, and writing novelty tunes by sitting down at the piano with bandleader George Redman and saying, "This is how it goes ..."

Advertisements billed the show as "The Bela Lugosi Revue, starring Dracula himself." But they were something of a misnomer. "There are hints of the Dracula thing throughout, but he didn't want to do the character," Willard says. Instead, he and Henry combined parodies of drawing room mysteries and the popular *Dragnet* TV show, with the 71-year-old Lugosi playing the butler—"which he enjoyed," says Willard. "He thought it was a lot of fun."

Lugosi's character was named Boris Kozloff, a play on the name of Frontier owner Jake Kozloff as well as a certain horror star. Willard says the cast knew Lugosi had fallen on hard times, and that four shows a night—from 9 p.m. to 2:30 a.m.—were tough on him. But Willard remembers no drug use and says Lugosi performed his part well. "When you get old actors together they become

part of the whole game. In some of his early years (Lugosi) probably had indulged in a little comedy... He'd had a long career so it probably brought back memories, doing a little bit of this burlesque stuff."

Silly as the following script excerpts may be, it must be remembered that Vegas was still only coming into its prime. The Sands had just opened a year earlier, and no—Sinatra was not in town during Lugosi's run at the Slipper, providing no easy explanation for why The Chairman later sent money to Lugosi after he institutionalized himself for drug addiction in 1955. However, Lugosi's burlesque show did have one equally odd competitor in town: Ronald Reagan, performing at the adjacent Last Frontier! Alas, there are no documentations of any meetings.

In Willard's script, Lugosi as the butler first frightens Sparky Kaye, dressed as a maid.

Lugosi: There's something wrong in this house-

hold. And it feels like murder. I'm an expert at murder, you know.

Sparky: Yes, there is something wrong in this house. Ever since you've been here. Say—haven't I seen you somewhere before?

Lugosi: (Bloodcurdling laugh) BOO! (The maid runs away.)

Virginia Dew, playing the lady of the house, enters and greets him as Boris. "Madame—do not call me Boris," He instructs. "Call me Kozloff."

Willard, playing Lord Ashely, enters with a khaki safari uniform torn and covered in blood. "Why Master," Lugosi asks. "Have you been shaving yourself again?"

Willard explains that he's been poisoned by the African tribe of Mau Mau, then collapses on the bed. "And now he's dead," Lugosi proclaims, with a weird laugh—"Because of Mau Mau and the Asp." He calls the police: Henry and co-star Jimmy Cavanaugh, parodying Jack Webb and Harry Morgan as Friday and Smith.

Hank: Where's the corpse? Where's the corpse?

Lugosi: You're looking at him.

Hank: Hello corpse.

During the Bela "Dracula" Lugosi run at the Silver Slipper of the Last Frontier Village, which bowed out a couple of days ago for Buster Keaton there now, one feature of it all stands out strikingly in my mind.

If you remember, Joan White, a pleasant and warmly constructed blonde, and Bela Lugosi, whose forte runs more toward cold fingers, black garb and shocking makeup, put on a lusty scene from *Dracula*. He charms (that's a laugh, or haven't you seen Lugosi?) his blonde captive (Joan) into a hypnotic state, then sinks his teeth into her neck viper-fashion. She lets go with a weird scream, then the curtain.

I saw this show at least eight times during its long run and suffered mightily for Joan while env... I mean, hating Dracula.

— From "Vegas Daze & Nites" by Ralph Pearl, *Las Vegas Sun*, April 1954.



Vampira appeared in a Las Vegas act with Liberace in early 1956. The act was intended for Lugosi and Liberace, but due to health reasons Lugosi was not able to appear.



Terre Sheehan, "The Girl in the Champagne Glass," was the featured entertainer during the run of "The Bela Lugosi Revue."

Lugosi: No, not me. Him, over there.

Hank: All right corpse. What did you do with the body? Speak up. Where'd you hide it?

Joan White, playing a reporter tagging along with the two detectives, puts her arms around Lugosi's neck. "I think you're cuter than Jimmy Stewart," she tells him. "Boris, you just kill me." "I'd like to," he replies.

While looking for clues, Hank takes his first real look at Lugosi.

Hank: Haven't I seen you someplace before? I know — on an old television picture.

Lugosi: Don't you remember Dracula?

Hank: Dracula? Oh sure I remember Dracula. Best stripper the Embassy ever had.

Willard's surviving script is missing a solo routine that Lugosi did center-stage, since it was added later and inserted into his original script. Only the last part of it remains:

"You must be flipping your ever-lovin' wig

I'm the real gone ghoul the cats all dig

The chicks dig me most like Errol Flynn

So don't beat your chops man—just give me some skin!

Henry obliges, saying "Well— Daddy-O!" as they "high-five."

With the investigation going nowhere, Lugosi invites the policemen to "Come with me to the cellar. I will show you my collection of black widow spiders, my snakes and gila monsters."

"Nice fellow. He's got the heart of a pit boss," Henry notes. Willard's copy of the script ends with the mystery unresolved:

Virginia: He was on a safari in deepest, darkest Africa, seeking uranium and also the stomping grounds of the dinosaur.

Hank: Huh?

Virginia: Dinosaur. You're so stupid you don't know what dinosaur is?

Hank: What do you mean, stupid? Dinosaur. That's the broad that sings on the radio (holding a picture of Dinah Shore).

Bad puns were no less a part of Vampira's TV hostess act. The same year Lugosi played Vegas, Maila Nurmi was catching the attention of Southern California TV audiences as the original wise-cracking horror hostess. She also caught the attention of Liberace, who also had used a syndicated TV program as a vehicle for his piano playing to grab the fancy of the masses. By the time Liberace was chosen to open the Riviera in 1955, he was a hot enough attraction that the Riviera paid him a

then-record \$50,000 per week to be its first showroom attraction. This is even more amazing considering that in that era, showrooms did not charge admissions, instead using the entertainment as casino enticements.

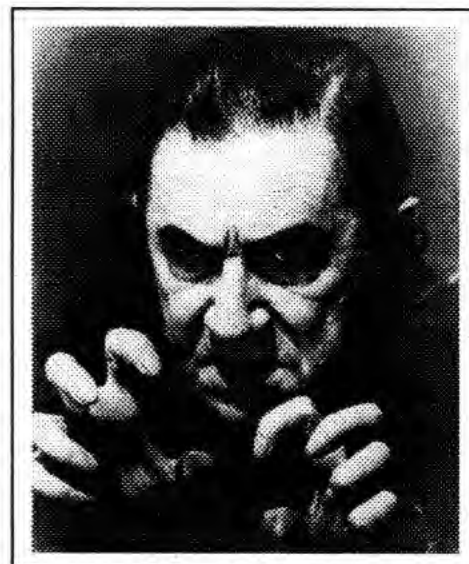
By the time Liberace returned in April of 1956, the flamboyant pianist spent \$35,000 trying to top his first appearance—speculatively hoping to land the revue on network television to make back his costs (as far as we know, it never happened). The 75-minute review included seven complete production numbers, all tied together by Vampira herself under the theme, "Come As You Were."

Liberace opened the show alone, then moved, according to Willard—who by now was reviewing shows for the *Las Vegas Sun* newspaper—"into the special set alongside the proscenium for the first verbal thrusts with Vampira." The crypt side-set was adorned with the placard, "Tomb Sweet Tomb."

The idea was that she hypnotized the pianist to take him into the past. "The Persian Room of the Plaza Hotel, 1946" set up the fabulous "Jibiberace Mambo," then each scene went further back: "The Imperial Palace of Vienna—1856" transformed "Lee" into Johann Strauss, while the final scene, "King George's Court—1456" clad the sequined one as a court jester, the better to get hip to "Calypso Blues," backed by bongo drumming. It goes without saying that Liberace wakes from his trance for a finale that included "Beer Barrel Polka" and Les Baxter's reigning national hit, "The Poor People of Paris."

It would have been a very strange week to have taken a time machine ride back to Vegas. If the idea of Liberace and Vampira onstage together isn't strange enough, consider that a young Elvis Presley was making his Las Vegas debut at the nearby New Frontier (the old Last Frontier, renamed to acknowledge a "space-age" makeover). Moreover, lounge veteran Freddy Bell says that Elvis and Vampira were part of the same group that came to see his show at the Sands!

(Mike Weatherford is an entertainment reporter for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* newspaper. "Vampires in Vegas" is an excerpt from his forthcoming book, "Cult Vegas—Everything Weird and Wonderful about the Swingin'-est Town on Earth," which will be published by Huntington Press later this year.)■



The BELA LUGOSI Revue

February 19, 1954

Exclusive in Cult Movies! The actual script for the "D.R.A.G.N.E.T." skit which was featured in "The Bela Lugosi Revue" in Las Vegas in 1954.

**By Bill Willard
& Hank Henry**

Starring Bela Lugosi
Jimmy, Hank, Virginia, Joan & Bill on-stage in
1 to sing:

We love a mystery show
A mystery show is great
Each night by our Video
We quiver and quake and wait
For the plot to thicken and to boil
Will the hero win or the villain foil?
We love a mystery show
A mystery show is great.

Jimmy: WE GET GOOSE PIMPLES
All: A mystery show is great!
(Music: "Dragnet")

Jimmy: (At Narrator's mike) It was Thursday, April 31 and smoggy as usual in Los Angeles, and we were working the nightwatch on homicide. Sgt. Hank Henry was playing a game of solitaire and cheating himself but good. My name's Friday. Then in comes this phone call and one of the most interesting cases I ever solved. It happened like this... (Exit)

(Music: "Dragnet")

CURTAIN. (Scene: Sparky as Maid, dusting. Sits on couch as Lugosi as the Butler enters)
Lugosi: Where's Lord Ashley? Have you seen him around today?

Sparky: Perhaps I have. What makes you ask?

Lugosi: There's something wrong in this house-

hold. And it feels like murder. I'm an expert at murder, you know.

Sparky: Yes, there is something wrong in this house. Ever since you've been here. Say—haven't I seen you somewhere before?

Lugosi: (Bloodcurdling laugh) BOO!

Sparky: (Scurries away)

Virginia: (As Lady Ashley, slinks in dressed in tight gown a la Charles Adams heavily made up around the eyes and carries a long cigarette holder.) Ah, there you are, Boris.

Lugosi: Madame—do not call me Boris. Call me

Kozloff.

Virginia: All right—Boris Kozloff. Where is my husband? I'm terribly worried.

Lugosi: Perhaps you'd like a cup of tea, Lady Ashley? With a pinch of Cyanide?

Virginia: Why not? I haven't been feeling myself lately.

Sparky: Then why don't you give him a crack at it?

Willard: (As Lord Ashley, dressed in khaki shorts, shirt all bloody, mustache and sideburns, pith helmet. Offstage bloodcurdling yell, then reels on clutching breast)

Lugosi: Why master—have you been shaving yourself again?

Willard: No, of course not. Can't you see I've been poisoned?

Sparky: (Looking at bloody shirt) It must be blood poison.

Willard: No, no you idiot. I've been poisoned by the African tribe of Mau Mau.

(Music: Gong)

Willard: There it is again—the gong of Mau Mau, and the Asp. Watch out for the Asp. (Collapses on bed)

Sparky: (Picks up wrist, feels pulse) He's dead.

Lugosi: Dead. The poor master. (Fiendish laugh)

Virginia: I lose more damn husbands. This guy is number 12.

Sparky: I'll never forget what a wonderful man he was. He used to accost me in the linen closet—always grabbed me between the soap and the towels.

Lugosi: And now he's dead. (Another weird laugh) Because of Mau Mau and the Asp.

(Music: Gong)

Virginia: What'll we do now?

Lugosi: I remember I played in a picture once where there was a corpse. Someone called the police.

Virginia: That's a splendid idea. Call the police.

Lugosi: (Pick up phone) Give me the police.

Jimmy: (Offstage mike) This is Friday.

Lugosi: I didn't ask what day it is. I want the police.

Jimmy: This is the police. My name's Friday.

Lugosi: Mr. Friday—there seems to be a corpse



here.

Jimmy: Is the corpse dead?

Lugosi: Quite dead. (Laugh) How soon can you be over?

Jimmy: We're on our way now.

Hank, Jimmy & Joan: (Enter fast. Biz with Lugosi still holding phone. etc. Jimmy goes far L., Joan R., Hank C.)

Hank: Where's the corpse? Where's the corpse?

Lugosi: You're looking at him.

Hank: (To Lugosi) Hello corpse.

Lugosi: Hello. (Skull it) No, not me. Him, over there.

Hank: (To corpse) All right corpse. What did you do with the body? Speak up. Where'd you hide it? (Biz with corpse)

Joan: (Over to Lugosi. Puts her arms around his neck.) Oh, Mr. Boris Kozloff, I've seen you so many times. I think you're cuter than Jimmy Stewart. (Lugosi puts her arms down. She tries again) Boris, you just kill me.

Lugosi: I'd like to. Say—who is this woman?

Jimmy: She's a reporter from the Morning Sun. Come on, now, Joanie—lay off the Butler. Let's start looking for clues.

Hank: What?

Jimmy: Clues. Clues.

Hank: (Over to Sparky) Where do you keep the clues?

Sparky: I dunno.

Hank: I'll go find 'em myself. Must be in the clues closet.

Jimmy: Come on, Sergeant—start looking for fingerprints.

Hank: (Take out magnifying glass. Looks at Lugosi) Haven't I seen you someplace before? I know—on an old television picture.

Lugosi: Don't you remember Dracula? (Menace biz)

Hank: Dracula? Oh, sure, I remember Dracula. Best stripper the Embassy ever had.

Lugosi: You must be flipping your ever—lovin' wig

I'm the real gone ghoul the cats all dig
The chicks dig me most like Errol Flynn
So don't beat your chops man—just give me some skin.

Hank: (Gives Lugosi some skin) Well—daddy-o!

Jimmy: This investigation is getting out of hand! (To Sparky) How intimate were you with Lord Ashley?

Sparky: Please!

Jimmy: Come on, how intimate were you?

Sparky: Oh, the poor master. (sobs) We were dancing not 30 minutes ago. He was showing me



how to do the Mambo. (Starts dancing)

(Music: "Mambo")

Hank: (Goes to Sparky and both Mambo until Jimmy's cut)

Jimmy: Come on you two, cut that out! (To Lugosi) You. Yes, you. How was he killed?

Lugosi: He said something strange before he died. Something like "Mau Mau."

(Music: Gong)

Lugosi: And there was more. "Watch out for the Asp—watch out for the Asp."

(Music: Gong)

Hank: The Asp?

Lugosi: That's right. The Asp.

Sparky: And now he's dead.

Hank: Yes. And now he doesn't know his asp from a hole in the ground!

Jimmy: (To Sparky) Where were you when the corpse walked in?

Sparky: He wasn't a corpse when he walked in.

Hank: You mean the guy wasn't dead when he walked into the room? Hmmmm. Friday—there's something queer here—and I think it's the maid.

Jimmy: Lady Ashley—step into the hall. Sergeant Henry, you question the suspect. I'm going down and search the cellar.

Lugosi: Come with me to the cellar. I will show you my collection of black widow spiders, my snakes, and gila monsters. (Laugh fiendishly)

(Curtain closes.)

Hank, Virginia and Joan walk into 1

Hank: Nice fellow. He's got the heart of a pit boss. Now, Lady Ashley, I'm going to ask some questions. And you (to Joan) take these notes down.

Joan: Okay, Sarg.

Hank: Lady Ashley, did your husband have any hobbies?

Virginia: Well, when he wasn't annoying the maid, he was exploring—or was it the other way around?

Hank: Put that down. What did your husband do on Tuesday night?

Virginia: (Bashful) Well, on that night, both of us retired early and stayed in bed until morning.

Hank: What did you do on Wednesday night?

Virginia: The same thing, only we stayed in bed longer.

Hank: (To Joan) Are you getting all this?

Joan: I'm not, but she was.

Hank: And what did you do on Thursday night?

Virginia: We went to bed early that night and every night until he died.

Hank: Went to bed early every night until he died, eh? (To Joan) Put this down: "The victim died happy." Now, Lady—tell us the facts about your husband's life—out of bed.

Virginia: Well, as I was telling you—my husband was an explorer. Just last week he was on his safari in deepest, darkest Africa.

Hank: Deepest, darkest Africa, eh? What for?

Virginia: He was seeking uranium and also the stamping grounds of the dinosaur.

Hank: Huh?

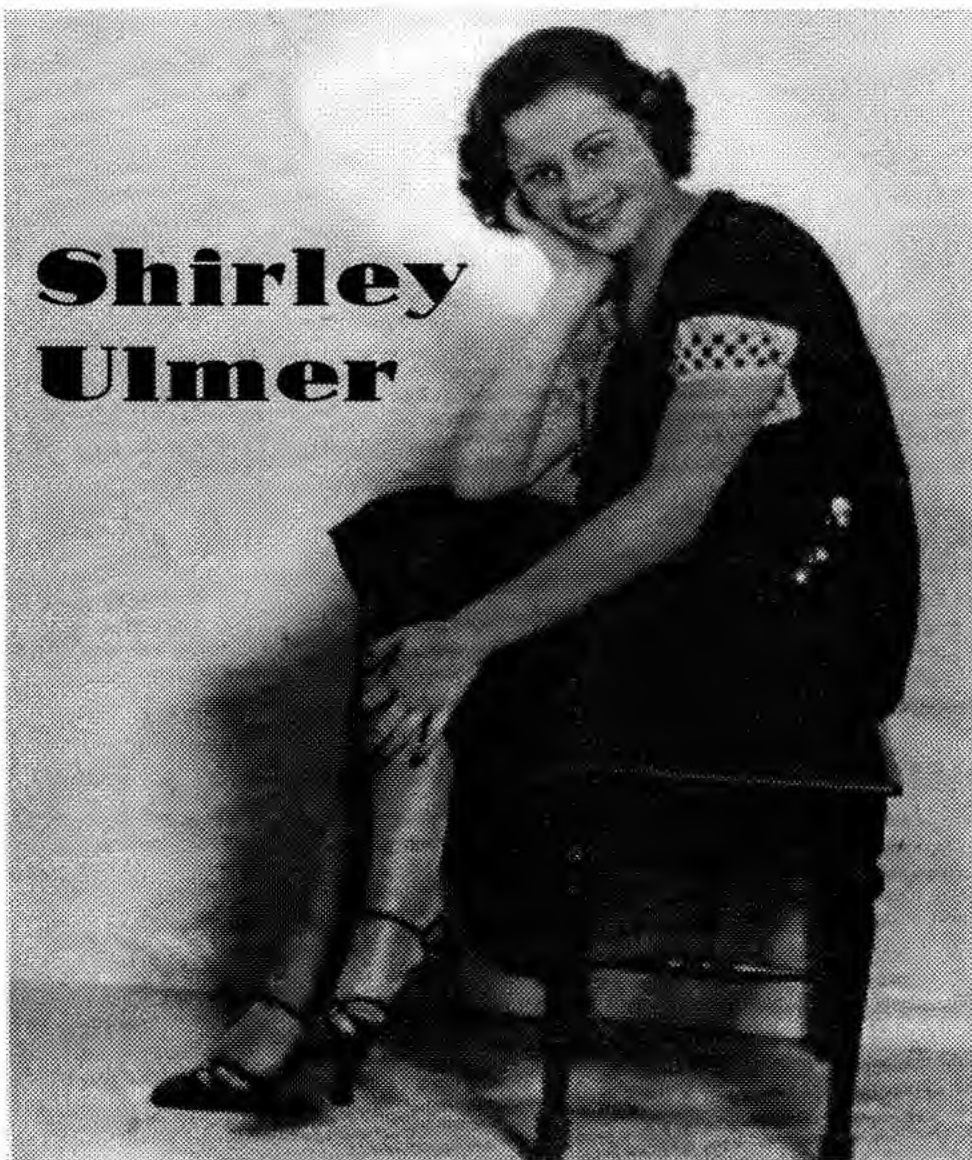
Virginia: Dinosaur. You're so stupid you don't know what dinosaur is?

Hank: What you mean stupid? Dinosaur. That's the broad that sings on the radio.

Virginia & Joan: Oh, No! (Hold picture until blackout)

BLACKOUT ■

Shirley Ulmer



by Tom Weaver

Behind every great man, the old saying goes, there's a woman. In the case of legendary director Edgar G. Ulmer, "the Miracle Man of Poverty Row," the woman was his devoted wife Shirley, who script-supervised all his movies from *The Black Cat* (1934) on—and who married Ulmer even though it meant years of major-studio blacklisting for both of them. In this *Cult Movies* interview, Shirley Ulmer talks candidly about her "tremendous journey" (her four decades with Ulmer), the experience of working with him in the margins of Hollywood, and some of the many cult films they made on small budgets, in 16-hour days, and against all odds.

Born June 12, 1914, in New York City, teenager Shirley came out to the movie capital for the first time in the early 1930s, after her banker-father was wiped out in the Crash. While her dad tried to make a new start in California, Shirley met picture people and began working as a script supervisor. She was married to independent producer Max Alexander when she met and instantly fell in love with Edgar Ulmer, eventually divorcing Alexander—nephew of Universal president Carl Laemmle. Hollywood outcasts, Ulmer and Shirley were subsequently forced to work in the East, on

Poverty Row and at other small indie studios where the indomitable Ulmer forged a remarkable career as a master of minimalism with memorable movies like *Bluebeard*, *Detour*, *Strange Illusion*, *The Man from Planet X*, and others.

Shirley is also a writer of screenplays, teleplays (*The Lone Ranger*, *Batman*, *S.W.A.T.*, *Chips*, more) and the book, *The Role of Script Supervision in Film and Television*. In recent years she and her daughter Arianne have maintained a high profile keeping alive the memory of Ulmer and his highly personal films. They are currently collaborating on the documentary, *The Edgar Ulmer Story*.

Cult Movies: Your father came out to Hollywood to make a new start as a banker or in the picture business?

Shirley Ulmer: In anything [laughs]! He didn't have any idea about the picture business, and banking was a no-no at that time. My grandmother (that's on my mother's side) knew a lady who was Willie Wyler's mother (I remember that Wyler's mother was very annoyed that the Hillcrest County Club was anti-Semitic then). She was the one who introduced me to [MGM production executive Irving G.] Thalberg and so forth, and that's how I got to be a script supervisor, thanks to

her and my grandmother and a lady by the name of Moree Herring, who was a script supervisor at Metro. Thalberg was very kind to me, he said, "If you want to be a writer and you want to be on sets and learn something about the business, being a script clerk is a good way for a woman." That was what really got me started in the business.

CM: Were you already Mrs. Max Alexander at that point?

Ulmer: No, not yet. I wrote a little play that Pasadena Playhouse put on and I played a small, autobiographical kind of part in it. After the show, Junior Laemmle and Max Alexander came backstage. So we went out, Junior and Max and another girl, I think her name was Betty.

CM: On a double-date.

Ulmer: Yes. I picked Max, who was Uncle Carl Laemmle's nephew, and then I sort of saw him exclusively during that entire summer. When the big [Long Beach] earthquake happened [in 1933], my mother said, "I've had it out here, let's go back to New York." We did, my mother and father and I landed up in Brooklyn, Kings Highway. I was very unhappy that they brought me back to New York. Max began telephoning me long distance, because he wanted to marry me. Finally I said yes, because I was very unhappy about living at home with my mother, who didn't like the idea of me going around meeting producers and trying to sell my scripts [laughs]! He sent me a train ticket and a thousand dollars to come out to California. I cashed the train ticket in and I bought myself a boat trip, a two-week trip on the Grace Line, a boat that went through the Panama Canal and stopped off in all these different ports along the northern part of South America. It was very exciting 'cause I had a little flirtation on the trip [laughs]—I was quite a gal, I didn't realize it! I wasn't scared, I was going to marry Max Alexander, but I was unhappy because I met [actor] Dane Clark on the boat. We had a little romantic thing going, but nothing serious. We didn't go to bed, but we did spend a lot of time together. Then I got out to California and I married Max.

CM: Did you marry him because you loved him or to get away from home?

Ulmer: I married him to get away from home. I was very fond of him, he was a nice guy, but a very simple man. When we were first married, we went to Hawaii on our honeymoon, then we came back and lived in Uncle Carl's big house. Then we took a little apartment on Stanley in Hollywood. Uncle Carl helped us with furniture and all kinds of lovely gifts, and he was very happy with the marriage.

CM: How did you meet Edgar Ulmer?

Ulmer: Max was hiring Edgar to work [as a second unit director] on *I Can't Escape* [1934] and he invited him to dinner at our apartment on Stanley. I was in the kitchen making a pot roast when I heard this man's voice that was so exciting to me—not just the accent, the timbre of his voice. I thought, "Oh, what a crazy, exciting man, what a beautiful voice!" I went in the living room and Max introduced me, and that's how I met Edgar. Then after we had dinner, Max made the mistake of saying he was very tired and he had a headache, and that I would entertain Edgar, go out to the movies or something with him. Well, I entertained Edgar...and that was the beginning of the end of Max [laughs]!

CM: Where did you and Ulmer go that night?

Ulmer: We went driving out to the beach. I had never met anyone like him, his knowledge was...incredible! He made me feel *stupid*, really. I talked about the book that I was writing [*Sinners in Sight*] and he talked about his experiences as an orphan after the War, when he had been sent to Sweden, and all the people he knew were famous—amazing brains. And *he* had an amazing brain. It was a very exciting evening. He started me out on a tremendous journey which was 40-odd years of marriage with him before he died. It wasn't always *easy*—he was not faithful, I had to watch out for that! He even had a daughter out of wedlock while we were married.

CM: Subsequent "dates" with Ulmer took place behind Max Alexander's back, correct?

Ulmer: Yes.

CM: What was it like being part of the Laemmle clan?

Ulmer: It was *horrible*. That marriage only lasted a year, dear. Sundays were a disaster—on Sundays you sat around the table with the whole family at Uncle Carl's house, and everybody who was a top person at the studio was invited. That was a big deal, to be invited. Uncle Carl (unfortunately!) liked me very much [*laughs*] and he had me seated there and he had me giving my opinions. I remember one opinion I gave, I told him how I had seen Margaret Sullavan in a play in New York, I've forgotten which one, and I thought she was a great actress. He turned to Junior and he said, "You hear what Shirley said? Find out more about Margaret Sullavan!" And he later hired her! So *that* was my contribution to the industry! Uncle Carl had a tremendous estate—it got broken up into five or six estates. It was a huge hunk of land with *many*

houses on it. He sold it when he sold the studio.

CM: When you say that Uncle Carl "unfortunately" liked you, does that mean that you didn't particularly like *him*?

Ulmer: Oh, I didn't *dislike* him, he was a *funny*

old man. But he was deaf, and you had to scream for him to hear you. He wouldn't use his hearing aid. He had very old-fashioned ideas, and he *never* forgave Edgar for taking me away from his nephew Max.

CM: Was James Whale at the Sunday luncheons?

Ulmer: Yes, he was at the luncheons very often. He was nice. My memory doesn't tell me too much, only that he was a nice comfortable man.

CM: What was Junior like?

Ulmer: Junior was... weird. He was such a hypochondriac—he was always fighting some illness, some of them real and some of them, I think, imaginary. He wore Kotex to keep from catching cold on his penis [*laughs*]—*that* I remember! By the way, there was once an article which said I was having an affair with the old man [*laughs*]. That was not true—that made me *mad*!

CM: Did Junior live at home with his father?

Ulmer: Yes, he did.

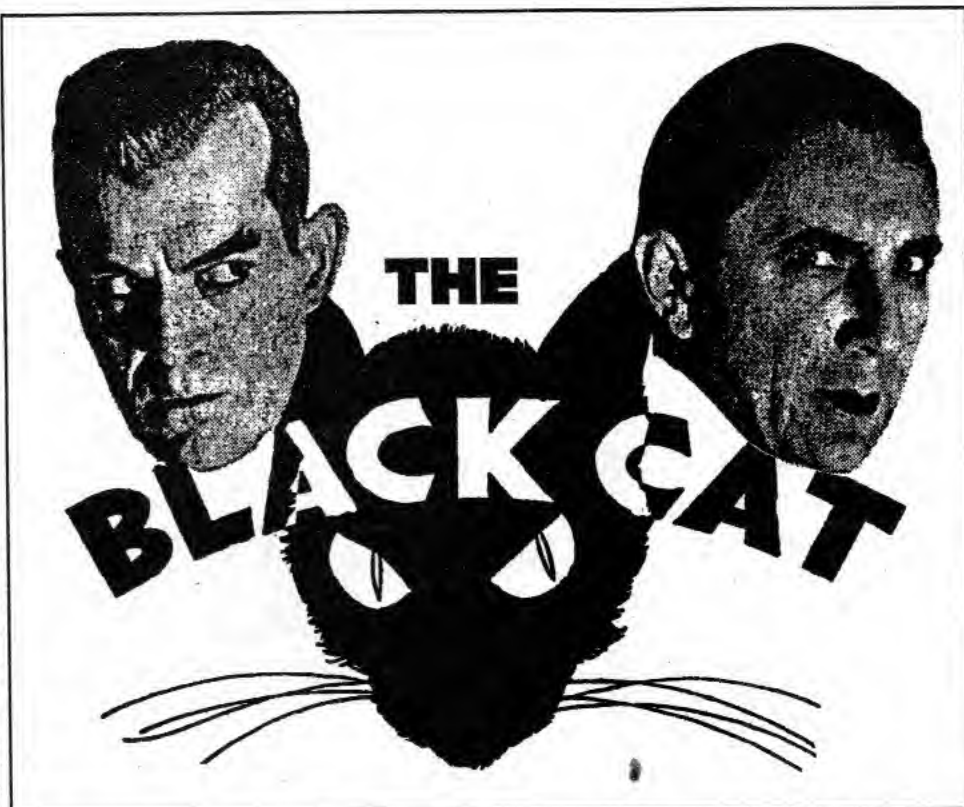
CM: If Max Alexander was part of the Laemmle family, why wasn't he making Universal pictures? Why was he making independents?

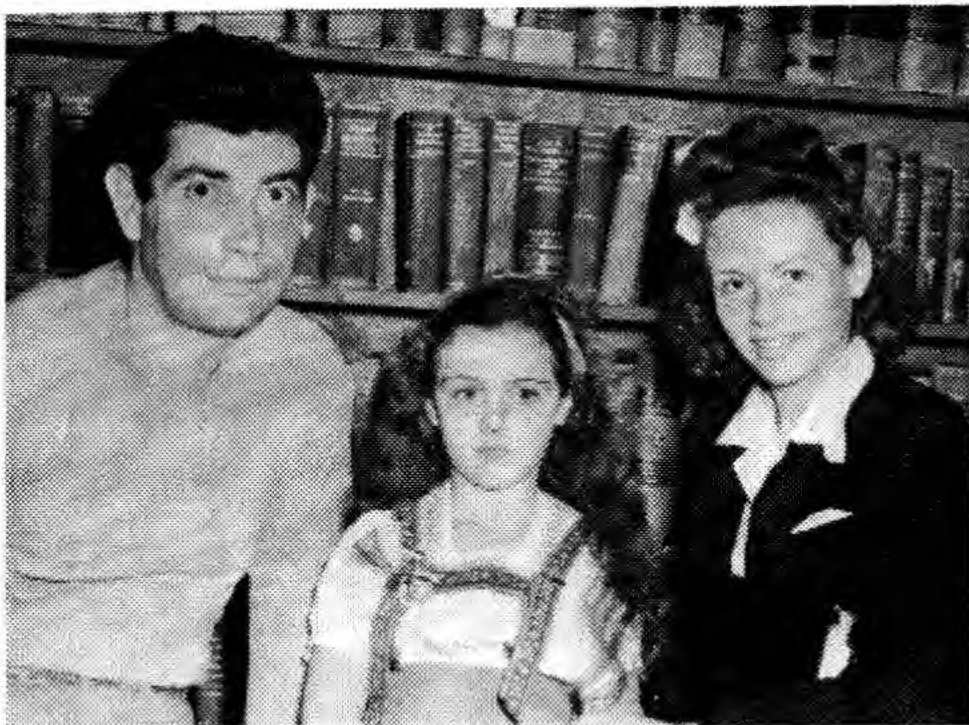
Ulmer: He had his own company, Beacon Productions, because he wanted to show that he could do something on his own. He owned a little studio on Santa Monica Boulevard. But he was on good terms with his Uncle Carl and he took care of Uncle Carl's business things. Uncle Carl owned that whole block on the corner—Melody Lane was a restaurant where *everybody* went, there on the corner of Hollywood and Vine. Uncle Carl owned that and the rest of that whole square block. Max used to collect rents and things like that—

CM: In addition to running his own motion picture company.

Ulmer: Right. Max's other two uncles (on his mother's side) were the Stern brothers—they made the *Our Gang* comedies, and they were very famous and very wealthy.

(continued)





The Ulmer family at PRC Studios.

CM: The first movie you worked on was Max Alexander's *I Can't Escape*?

Ulmer: Yes, with Lila Lee. In those days, when you got divorced, you had to wait a year to get it finalized, and when I met Edgar, he was just finished with that year of waiting and he was celebrating. He had been married to a girl by the name of Joan Warner, whose name he used sometimes as a director [Ulmer did some early directing under the name John Warner]. She was a society girl and she had a relative, I think an uncle, who was a vice-president of the United States. Edgar and Joan Warner had a little girl, but after the divorce, Edgar never saw the child. I sent a check of \$80 every month, as the court had decreed. We never saw her until she was grown-up and we were doing *Carnegie Hall* [1947]. She came and saw Edgar and borrowed \$10,000 from him—she was sick and she needed an operation or something. Then we never heard from her again. I don't blame her. She didn't have the advantage of knowing her father.

The Black Cat and other Universal memories

Ulmer: *The Black Cat* would never have been made if "Uncle Carl" had not gone to Europe, that I know. Junior was a very psycho, mixed-up young man, and Edgar was playing psychiatrist for him or something [laughs]. And so Junior had a real crush on Edgar, they were very close. It was Junior who got Edgar to do *The Black Cat*. When the old man came back from Europe, he didn't even want to release *The Black Cat*, because it had classical music in it. He didn't like that, he said, "The public can't take classical music, I can't take it! It's no good!" [Laughs] So it was a very strange thing that *Black Cat* became successful.

CM: What impressions did you get of Karloff and Lugosi?

Ulmer: Boris was an intellectual, a very nice, easy guy to work with. Bela was a clown. Bela told

jokes, he told crazy stories that he was a *hangman*. On the set, he did all kinds of funny things to get attention. He was showing off.

CM: That's funny, because from everything I've heard and read, Lugosi usually kept to himself on the sets of his pictures.

Ulmer: Why he acted that way, I don't know. He invited Edgar and me to his home, which I understood at that time was a big deal. He treated his wife like she was a servant maid—that was my impression [laughs]. I didn't like him for that, but I never said anything. He seemed to be very fond of Edgar and took direction nicely.

CM: Was your visit to Lugosi's house during the making of *The Black Cat*?

Ulmer: No, much later, after the movie was made, after I started living with Edgar. (We weren't

married legally yet, but I was living with him.) Lugosi invited us to his home, and I recall that in the foyer of the house, right where we came in, was a huge painting of him in *Dracula*. And, again, I remember him forcing his little wife around very harshly. I felt sorry for her.

CM: Several film historians have written that Ulmer's "dark side" manifested itself on *The Black Cat*. Is that true, or is that just modern writers trying to be dramatic?

Ulmer: I've heard that, too. Maybe it did; I can't say whether it did or not. That early on, I didn't know he had a dark side—I just knew that he got difficult at times [laughs].

CM: Were you romantically involved with him when he was making *The Black Cat*?

Ulmer: Not until afterwards.

CM: So it was just a coincidence that you were assigned to *The Black Cat* as script supervisor.

Ulmer: I wasn't assigned to be the script supervisor, I just wangled my way in there because I wanted to watch Moree Herring the script supervisor, I wanted to learn more from her. So I wound up doing all her notes. I didn't get any credit, but in those days, you never got any credit. It was mostly an occupation for men, believe it or not. At Metro, there was only one girl [script supervisor]—everybody else was male. They changed that when they found that these males, like Mervyn LeRoy and a lot of others who started there as script supervisors, would leave and become directors, and the girls would stay.

CM: What was Peter Ruric, the writer of *The Black Cat*, like?

Ulmer: He was brilliant, really, but *cuckoo* [laughs]. He wasn't like any ordinary person I'd ever met. But very, very brilliant—Edgar adored him, and they were very close. He was one who used to show up for the Sunday luncheons at Uncle Carl's.

CM: *Black Cat* was made very cheaply and very fast. Obviously you worked long hours.

Ulmer: Oh, and how! Not only on *The Black Cat* but on all Ulmer films, it was usually a 16-hour day. You'd get to work at six in the morning and you were lucky if you got home before midnight.



Ulmer, unknown executive, Lugosi and Karloff on the set of *The Black Cat*.

The cameraman on *The Black Cat* [John Mescall] was very, very good. He was already recognized as a top cameraman.

CM: And Ulmer got along well with him?

Ulmer: Very good. He always got along with the heads of the departments. He didn't get along with anybody that was a four-flusher or anything, but he got along with all of his crews. His crews always loved him, and he tried very hard all the way through his life to get the same people again and again.

CM: And you *didn't* get the impression that Karloff and Lugosi were close friends.

Ulmer: They weren't close friends if they were friends *at all*, they just were sort of polite to each other. But you could feel a certain amount of jealousy or *tension*, I should say, going on between them.

CM: Even emanating from Karloff?

Ulmer: Oh, yes. He had a certain contempt, because Lugosi *did* act like a clown, he acted silly. I don't think Karloff, any more than Edgar or I, believed these stupid stories Lugosi told us!

CM: Did Lugosi tell people his stories one-on-one, or did he hold court?

Ulmer: He would hold court. He was reserved on his other pictures—at least that's what everybody tells me. But not with *us*! But I thought he was excellent in the picture.

CM: Who was *better* in the picture, Karloff or Lugosi?

Ulmer: They were both good, they were both right for their parts. Karloff didn't want to make the picture, he didn't want to be known as a horror actor. He didn't want to do this film, but when Edgar showed him his sketches and the sketch of the costume he [Karloff] would wear, he weakened and said okay. Jacqueline Wells [Julie Bishop] was a pretty girl and she did a fine job, and David Manners was good, too. Edgar was a very interesting director—he directed with a baton. He *timed* their speeches. He drove Hedy Lamarr crazy because he timed the way she spoke with the baton, and would slap her on the ankles with the baton if she goofed [laughs]!

CM: Was he using the baton as early as *The Black Cat*?

Ulmer: Yes. Once Edgar told Peter Bogdanovich that he was a frustrated conductor—Edgar was *very* knowledgeable. He read music and he always had scores around the house, and one year he taught a course at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia [on music theory and history]. So maybe he felt he was conducting! For Father's Day every year, our daughter Arianné always gave him a new baton, because he broke them all the time. He would go crazy on a good Beethoven's Ninth or things like that, "conducting" in the living room while he was listening to the music.

CM: Right in the middle of *The Black Cat*, and then later, in the middle of *Bluebeard*, Ulmer includes a scene of comic relief.

Ulmer: He usually did that on purpose, because he was worried about being considered too serious. He felt people needed comic relief and he tried to do comedy whenever he could. But he was not known for being a good comedy director.

CM: Supposedly Karloff's Satanist character was based on several real-life people—one of them Fritz Lang.

Ulmer: Well, Fritz Lang was one of the few people that Edgar did not get along with, so I don't



know. They spoke badly about each other [laughs]!

CM: In the Bogdanovich interview, Ulmer said that Fritz Lang was sadistic and he couldn't get along with him. Then, a few pages later, he said that Erich von Stroheim was sadistic and that he *loved* him! What was the difference between those two sadists?

Ulmer: There was quite a difference. Von Stroheim was very intelligent and a much more knowledgeable man [than Lang]. Edgar liked someone he could *admire*.

CM: What were some of his cost-cutting methods on a movie like *Black Cat*?

Ulmer: He always got to a point where he would suddenly say, "Well, it's getting towards the end of the day. I'm gonna *cheat*—and you're gonna cheat along *with* me. We're gonna go *fast*, we're gonna do one take." They would call him "One-Take" Ulmer—the actors would get scared [laughs]!

CM: That's one way to hurry things up! Peter

Bogdanovich asked Ulmer, "How in the world do you do 80 setups a day?" and Ulmer said, "Ask my wife." Well, 30 years later, I'm asking.

Ulmer: How did we do 80 setups a day? Well, because he would do these one-take things. He used the dolly like nobody had ever used it before; he would make five-minute, ten-minute shots. He was always unhappy that they didn't make film reels longer [laughs]!

CM: Are you in any of his movies?

Ulmer: I was in *Natalka Poltavka* [1937]; it was a case where a girl didn't show up at work one day and Edgar said, "Go get in her costume." But I was Edgar's script supervisor on everything after *The Black Cat*, from 1934 on.

CM: Is *he* in any of his movies?

Ulmer: No. He didn't have the acting bug.

CM: Even though he started out as an actor?

Ulmer: Well, he was a different kind of actor, he was a stage actor.

(continued)



Ulmer and Lugosi on the set of *The Black Cat*.

CM: One of the most striking scenes in *Black Cat* is the one where Karloff prowls through the basement where he has all his dead wives in the upright glass coffins.

Ulmer [laughs]: I loved that scene. All of his sets were to me incredible, *always*. On his preparation for every film, he spent a lot of time and energy on creating sets that were unusual. In those days, his use of Plexiglas and glass and all the other crazy things he did was completely modernistic. He made wonderful sets.

CM: An actress named Lucille Lund, who played Karloff's wife in *The Black Cat*, says that Ulmer treated her nicely until he started to flirt with her and she turned him down. After that, she said, he wasn't very nice at all!

Ulmer: Oh, that's very likely [laughs]—I believe her! Edgar did not have much carrying-on with actresses, his playing-around was not with people in the business. Hedy Lamarr, who he knew from school days, was probably the only one he *may* have had an affair with, but I'm even inclined to doubt that it was for very long. 'Cause he really didn't like her. But he got a performance out of her in *The Strange Woman* [1946] that nobody else ever got. Also in *Loves of Three Queens* [1953], which we made in Italy in 1954.*

*The three-part film (a.k.a. *L'Amante di Paride* and *The Face That Launched a Thousand Ships*) is comprised of the stories of Genevieve of Brabant, Empress Josephine and Helen of Troy. After Ulmer directed the Genevieve of Brabant story, he and Hedy Lamarr had a fight (Lamarr had "bought out" the producers and started giving Ulmer instructions). For the first and only time, Ulmer

walked off a picture. Lamarr engaged director Marc Allegret to direct the other two segments.

CM: Did the Laemmles ever come onto the sets of any of these movies?

Ulmer: Just Junior. Like I said, we were lucky that *Black Cat* even got released because the old man was furious. When he came back, he was so angry at his son, who had allowed Ulmer to go so crazy and use classical music and crazy sets and all of this. He didn't like the film at all.

CM: Next Ulmer directed *Thunder Over Texas* [1934], which I've never seen. Was there anything about it that set it apart from other Westerns?

Ulmer: Yeah, it was accused of being another *Little Miss Marker*, it was the same kind of story. I wrote that film [using the pseudonym Shirle Castle].

CM: Did Ulmer seem out-of-place directing a Western?

Ulmer: No, he *liked* the idea. He wasn't too good at it, but he did it and he liked it [laughs]! He was fascinated because that was part of America that he knew nothing about. He used the name "John Warner" on that film—later, when I got annoyed, he stopped using it. I got annoyed because I thought maybe Edgar still cared for her [Joan Warner]. She had left him, and in their divorce she said he had slapped her. He never hit me, he was not violent in that way. He screamed like crazy, but he never touched me [laughs]!

CM: Do you think he slapped her?

Ulmer: Maybe...if she made him *mad* enough.

CM: Were you still married to Max Alexander when you did *Thunder Over Texas*?

Ulmer: Yes. Then I started living with Edgar

without being able to marry him because I had to wait that whole year, and we didn't get married until '35. I legally married Edgar a few months before my twenty-first birthday. Before that, I lived with him for almost a year, which was unheard-of in those days, too! We were living in the Christie Hotel on Hollywood Boulevard.

CM: When you did fall in love with Ulmer and decided to marry him, do you remember breaking the news to Max Alexander?

Ulmer: Well, he thought I was nuts [laughs]—*everybody* did! My own parents didn't talk to me for a couple of years.

CM: And Laemmle-wise, what were the repercussions?

Ulmer: Oh, we were told that we'd never work in Hollywood again. He couldn't get a job—that's why we went back to New York.

CM: He was told by *who* that he would never work again?

Ulmer: By everyone he called.

CM: So there was no face-to-face confrontation with any of the Laemmles.

Ulmer: No, no, no. But [Hollywood] just didn't want him around.

PRC, Bluebeard and John Carradine

CM: After living and working in the East for several years, you and Ulmer came back to Hollywood and started working at PRC.

Ulmer: Edgar met [PRC producer] Leon Fromkess, who was an accountant of sorts—a businessman—and a real movie buff. Edgar and he struck up quite a friendship. He was very nice, he and his wife Rita—she was a bit of a pain in the neck, because she was always around on the set and Edgar was always shooing her away! But a nice lady. Both of them were devout Christian Scientists. At PRC I was very busy looking up scripts for them and writing little cards with synopses of what the basic stories were about.

CM: What memories of *Bluebeard*?

Ulmer: The script was written by Pierre Gendron—he was a sick man in that he was, I guess, a semi-alcoholic. That made it a little difficult to work with him. But he could write like a dream and he got along with Edgar beautifully. He also had a wife whose first name was Mary and she assisted him, especially when he couldn't show up or was too far gone in the cups [laughs]!

CM: Back in Ulmer's Universal days, right after *The Black Cat*, he was going to make a movie about *Bluebeard*, so it must have been something that was in his mind even—

Ulmer: It was very much in his mind right along, yeah. He had a lot to do with the writing, and Pierre and his wife put it down on paper properly. He was an educated guy, this Pierre, very well-versed in literature. I might tell you that Edgar was terribly self-conscious because English was a second language to him. He could write wonderfully, but he didn't trust himself, he always wanted [help from] somebody who was knowledgeable in the English language. Pierre was a fine writer, but a difficult man.

CM: How was working at PRC different from working at one of the bigger studios?

Ulmer: Edgar had complete charge. Nobody else had a word to say. Fromkess was a very quiet man...his wife gave Edgar a little problem now and then, but Fromkess and Edgar got along very,

very well. Or they *did* until *The Strange Woman* came about. Hedy Lamarr wanted Edgar to direct her, and so Fromkess made a deal and loaned Edgar out to [*Strange Woman* producer] Hunt Stromberg. I've forgotten what Stromberg paid but it was a very large sum. Edgar had been earning \$200 a week on his contract with Fromkess, and Fromkess never gave him a penny of the extra money that he made by lending Edgar out to do *The Strange Woman*. That's when Edgar decided *enough is enough*, and *very* shortly thereafter, when his contract came due, he refused to work there any more.

CM: In what way was Mrs. Fromkess a pain in the neck? What was she trying to do by hanging out on the sets?

Ulmer: Well, she was a frustrated moviemaker, I guess [*laughs*]. She was a good woman, and they had a daughter who died of cancer. Mrs. Fromkess also died at an early age.

CM: Did Edgar Ulmer have input in the music of these PRC movies?

Ulmer: He had *all* the input! Everybody, Fromkess included, thought that he was crazy to want to do an operatic thing, the *Faust* [marionette show], in *Bluebeard*, but he insisted on doing it. And it *was* noted; in fact, *The Hollywood Reporter* gave us a very fine critique on it.

CM: What do you remember about composer Leo Erdody and cinematographer Eugene Schufftan, who collaborated with Ulmer at PRC?

Ulmer: Erdody and Edgar were bosom pals. Erdody was a fine musician. Erdody died very suddenly and it was a tragedy for Edgar—he didn't really get over it *ever*. He loved Leo Erdody. Erdody's father was a conductor in Hungary, and Liszt left Erdody's father his baton. The father gave the baton to Erdody, Erdody gave the baton to Edgar and Edgar used that baton when he was directing. That baton still exists.

Schufftan was a big help. Schufftan couldn't join the union [the American Society of Cinematographers], they wouldn't let him in, but he was *very* much around and in charge of the camera. He was a darling man. He was Edgar's favorite cameraman, and he and Edgar were very close friends. But Schufftan couldn't learn English properly. Every sentence had words from five different languages [*laughs*], he had all these languages mixed up. And he made us laugh very much and he would get very hurt, but we couldn't *help* laughing. It was very strange and very funny. He was a man of many languages—all at once!

CM: Talking to Bogdanovich, Ulmer called *Bluebeard* "a very lovely picture." What were some of the parts of it that he particularly enjoyed?

Ulmer: He enjoyed very much being able to do the *Faust* aria. Sonia Sorel, John Carradine's girlfriend, was good in that, too. Edgar *didn't* want her in it because he didn't like hiring someone just because she was John's girlfriend, but she surprised him and gave a very fine performance. As did all of them. Edgar felt that Carradine did one of his finest jobs in *Bluebeard*. And Carradine kind of agreed with him [*laughs*].

CM: Your daughter Arianné tells funny stories about Ulmer losing his patience and getting tough with actors who weren't giving him what he wanted. In all your years of working with Ulmer, what actor got it the *worst*? Who got it with both barrels?

Ulmer: Offhand, I think it might have been John



Saxon [on *The Cavern*, 1966]—he treated him pretty bad! But he got along with his women fine. He was known for pinching their ankles sometimes during a closeup, to get an expression [*laughs*], but none of them seemed to mind. They all got along with him.

CM: How about behind-the-camera people? Did he ever use that tactic with any of them?

Ulmer: No. He got along beautifully with *every*

crew. They were hand-picked and they were all wonderful.

CM: I like the flashback scene in *Bluebeard* with the distorted sets and imaginative camerawork.

Ulmer: Beautiful camerawork, yes. Those were the kind of touches that Edgar relied on Schufftan for.

CM: What more can you tell me about Carradine?

Ulmer: He was the Man Who Came to Dinner [*laughs*]. He and his son, who calls himself David Carradine, a funny little youngster. They had been living at the Garden of Allah, which was a very well-known place, an outdoor hotel with bungalows all around the pool area. It was very popular with the stars at that time. John brought his boy to dinner and he told us a sad story about this wife whom he was divorcing, the mother of David. She was trying to get John for back alimony, and he had to hide out from her. So he asked if he could stay with *us* awhile. So we always laugh—he was the Man Who Came to Dinner, but he stayed with us for *months* [*laughs*].

CM: So you got to know him quite well.

Ulmer: Of course, and also David, who was a *wild* boy who took our daughter Arianné to play with him. He called himself Captain Midnight and they would run all over the roofs of the buildings! It was so dangerous, it scared the hell out of me—I was always chasing him and scolding him [*laughs*].

CM: Did you ever regret letting Carradine move in?

Ulmer: Oh, no, he was *fun*. He could have been a professor of literature, really, and Edgar admired anyone who was that knowledgeable. When Carradine and David were staying with us, they stayed in Edgar's bedroom and Edgar moved back in with me.

CM: You and Ulmer had separate bedrooms?

Ulmer: We had separate bedrooms but we usually slept in my bedroom. Edgar's room was always a mess—he had his drawing board there and all of his stuff, and he wouldn't allow anybody to come in and clean up [*laughs*]. That was Edgar's "bedroom." He'd go back and forth—he would

(continued)



spend part of the night in my bedroom and then go into the second bedroom. He was an insomniac and he would get up in the middle of the night and work. This second bedroom attached to Arianné's bedroom, with a bathroom between them. If Arianné was up late at night or if she went into the bathroom and the light was showing beneath the door, she could go in there and talk to him. Most of the time Arianné talked to him was in the middle of the night.

CM: If Ulmer and Carradine were such great friends, why wasn't Carradine in more of Ulmer's movies?

Ulmer: Because Carradine got more money—he went on to become a *name*. When we used him, he was *not*.

CM: What was Sonia like?

Ulmer [pause]: I didn't like her too much, but she was a good little actress. We went to their wedding—my daughter was the flower girl and David Carradine was the ring bearer. It was in the Episcopal church on Wilshire Boulevard and they dressed in Shakespearean costumes. It caused a little publicity, and people talked about it. Arianné and David scattered the rosebuds.

CM: John Carradine in more than one interview mentioned directing one scene in *Bluebeard*. Do you know what he's talking about?

Ulmer: No. And I don't think he'd say that if Edgar were alive!

CM: What do you think of *Bluebeard*? Do you think it's one of Ulmer's better pictures?

Ulmer: I certainly do. It's hard to name my favorites, I can't pick *one*, but I can say offhand quickly *Ruthless* [1948], *The Cavern* and *Detour* [1945]. And *The Naked Dawn* [1955] definitely. Those would be the ones that I would name off the top of my head.

The Pirates of Capri

Ulmer: During the bad period in the U.S. [the HUAC period], Edgar and I were off to Europe. We were never really bothered at all, although the FBI did come see us before we went off—two gentlemen came to the house on King's Road and asked questions about certain friends of ours. I remember in particular they were interested at that moment in Gale Sondergaard. We didn't know anything about where she joined [the Communist party] or what she did, so I don't think we helped them! Then they gave Edgar an envelope with a special address on it, and said when we were in Europe and we were meeting all these people that were suspect, Edgar could [write it all down and] mail it back to them. And he said he'd be delighted.

So now we were off to Europe [to make *The Pirates of Capri*] with a producer by the name of Victor Pahlen, who was quite a character. I think they did that movie *The Bad and the Beautiful* [1952] about him. He had a lot of charm, he charmed everybody to death, but he was a bit on the crooked side [laughs]! He had gotten a deal together with a lady from Egypt to do this *Pirates of Capri* in Italy. Edgar had gone on first, to get everything arranged, and then he sent me a lot of telegrams and lists of things he was going to need.

I arrived in Italy with Arianné, who was a little girl—oh, she couldn't have been more than 11 or 12 years old. We arrived at Ciampino Airport near Ostia. (Everything was bombed out pretty bad, from the War.) We got out of the plane and I had



Shirley Ulmer



all these toys and books and things for Arianné. And some little Italian children started running after us. With all these bundles and everything, and trying to keep hold of the child, I was having a little problem! And these children were running after me, making me very nervous, yelling, "Jew! Jew!" And I thought, "Oh, my God, you mean they're anti-Semitic over here too?" So I was frightened, and I later found out they were yelling at me

"Giu! Giu!" meaning "Down! Down!" because I was schlepping all of these huge suitcases and wouldn't let go of them. They wanted to help me [laughs]! I didn't know a word of Italian beyond *arrivederci*!

I got into a little building there on the airfield and they opened up my suitcases and they immediately took away my cigarettes—I had a couple of cartons in there. They took *them* away. And there was no one there to meet us—I was looking for Edgar. Finally a lady came and she said she was sorry she was late, she was delayed. She had promised Edgar she would meet us. We could come to the hotel and rest a little and have a little something to eat, but then we had to catch a midnight train down to the location, which was in Taranto. I thought of *Canada*, that's the only Toronto I knew! "What are we doing in Toronto?" [Laughs]

This was probably October-November and we had been told that sunny Italy was *warm*, so I didn't have heavy clothes with me. Not for the child and not for me. We rushed to that train and we made it all right, and, my golly, it was *freezing*. One of my memories is that I couldn't put my head down on the pillow. We had a private train compartment and it was lovely, but it was so cold that the pillow felt like a block of ice [laughs]. There was no stop in Taranto, we got off the train at a little village close by, and there we were met by a car and chauffeur and driven down to Taranto. Now, Taranto have been bombed to the ground by the English. There wasn't a building with [an unbroken] window in it any more. We were taken us to the best-looking building of them all, which had some boarded-up windows. We got in there, into a great big sort of lobby, round, with a very unattractive lady sitting in the center at a raised dais or desk. We called her "The Animale" later—"The Animal." She was a very unattractive and ugly-acting person. And there were a lot of *very* pretty young women running around, most of them with just towels wrapped around them. Nothing ever dawned on me [laughs]—I led a very sheltered life! We were shown to our room, which was stone-walled and no windows, but at least it sheltered us a little from the cold. It had a great big double bed and there was a little single bed for Arianné over in the corner. It wasn't until maybe the second night that I realized where I was, because finally I asked questions. Edgar told me, "Look, I couldn't find any better accommodations. This is a whorehouse!" A legal, government-licensed Italian naval whorehouse. Later on, Edgar would tell this story—he said, "I'll bet you I'm the only man who took my wife and daughter to a whorehouse!" [Laughs]

CM: Louis Hayward, who starred in *Pirates of Capri*, was a friend of your husband's, wasn't he?

Ulmer: Yes, he was. Before I left, Louis was in an automobile accident and he had a bad chest injury and a cold, and he wasn't gonna come. And I told him it was sunny Italy and he would *love* it [laughs]! So I was scared to death!

CM: He came before or after you did?

Ulmer: A day or two later. He and the comedian [Mikhail] Rasumny, who brought his wife Mimi along—they arrived, and they were *very* angry at me because I hadn't told them what the weather was. So none of us were properly clothed for cold winter climate. Louis arrived and he still had pains in his chest, so I used that beastly woman there, "The Animale"—I got hot water from her. I

kept paying her exorbitantly, whatever I had. And I borrowed Mimi Rasumny's douche bag, as a hot water bottle. Louis wore these voluminous big shirts with the big sleeves and everything, so I tied that hot water bottle around his aching chest.

We were shooting on a ship and we were on a very tight time schedule, and Louis Hayward didn't want to get on the boat. He had a little problem there—he didn't like the idea of going on an Italian ship because he had been in the war, and he was still *mad* at them, the Italian sailors. But we finally got him to go, and I kept running back to the house there to get the hot water bag filled up, to kind of keep his chest warm. After a week or so, Rasumny came to me and he said, "Shirley, you ruined my sex life." I said, "Why?" He said, "I've got to have Mimi's bag back. She won't have sex with me unless she has that douche bag!" [Laughs] And there was the end of my scheme of keeping Louis' chest warm!

CM: And what happened to the envelope that the FBI asked you to bring along on the trip?

Ulmer: Oh, we destroyed it right away [laughs]!

The Man from Planet X

Ulmer: Last night I put on my goggles and I watched *Man from Planet X* tape all over again, and I thought it was a *very* respectable, *nice* picture. It was made in 1950 at the Hal Roach Studios, produced by Jack Pollexfen, who was a rather shy man. We all almost died because of the use of Nu Gel to make the fog you see in the picture. It was a ghastly experience and we all got sick. When we made *Man from Planet X*, we were in a *terrible* rush, because we had a job coming up that would take us to Spain.

CM: *Planet X* was one of the few Hollywood-made movies that you did around that time. Which did you enjoy more, making movies in Hollywood or abroad?

Ulmer: I don't know whether the right word is "enjoy"—they were hard work!

CM: Both at home and abroad.

Ulmer: Yes. The experiences in Europe, of course, were much more exciting in those years, because they didn't know Americans like we didn't know them. We were strangers to them.

CM: *Man from Planet X* was the first time working with Robert Clarke. How did you like him?

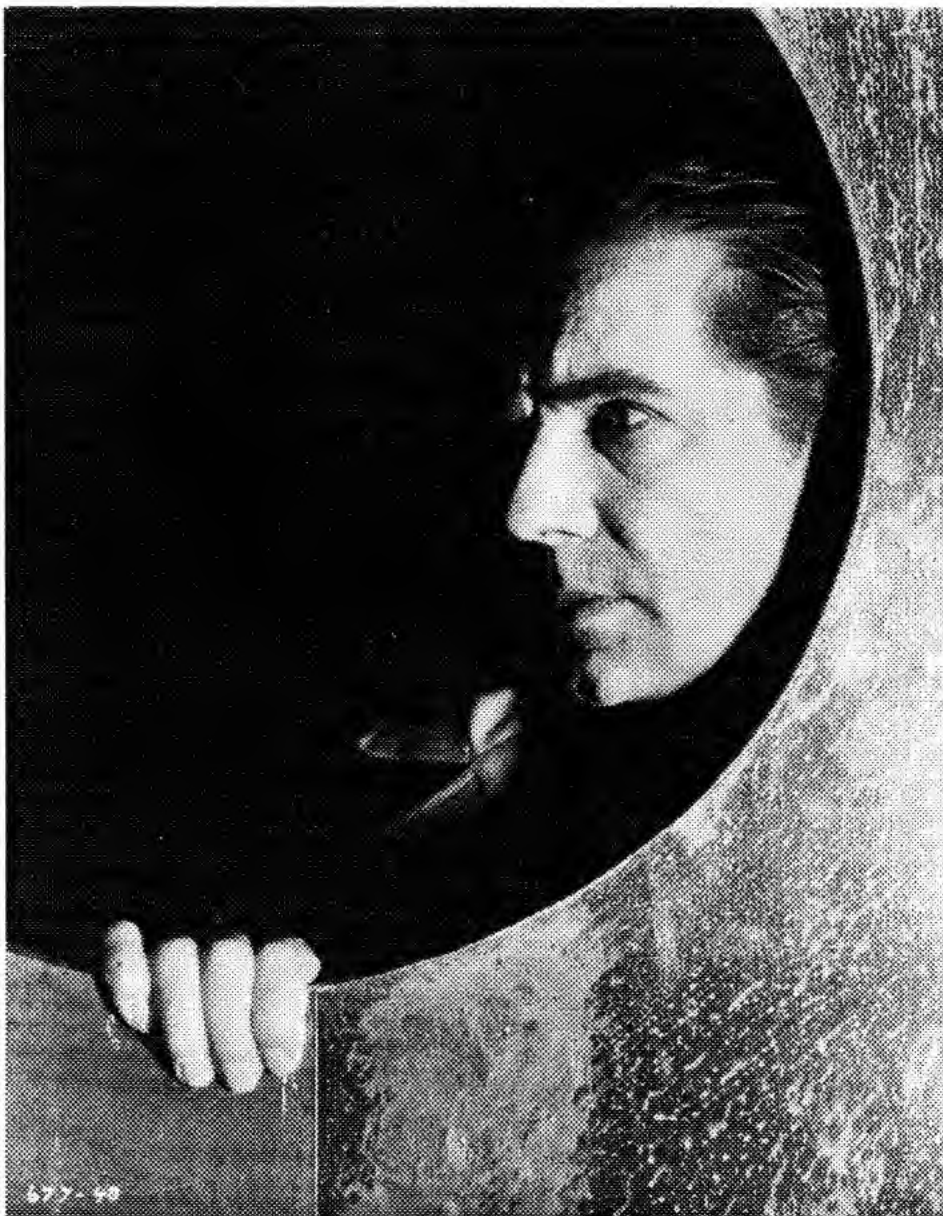
Ulmer: Easygoing guy—*very* nice person. I can't say enough nice things about him. Margaret Field was the mother of Sally, and Margaret gave up her career and put all her efforts behind that little girl of hers. (It paid off!) Margaret was a very simple, pleasant, nice personality.

CM: And the guy who played X?

Ulmer: I think he was okay—*very* okay, actually. But he was a bit of a complainer! He'd complain about the gear. He didn't complain *bitterly*, but he wasn't too happy. Edgar called that thing [mask] a "douche bag"!

CM: Robert Clarke talks about making \$210 for starring in that movie.

Ulmer: Well, Edgar got about 300, so Robert Clarke didn't do so bad! *Man from Planet X* was made in a very fast and tense schedule. Nu Gel was a product that caused the fog, and it caused us all to get sick. It was *horrible* to breathe. We didn't know any other way, Edgar couldn't get the effect if he didn't use the Nu Gel. So somehow or other, sick or not, we got through. We *couldn't* have a delay because, as I said, Harry and Eddie Danzigers



[producers of Ulmer's earlier *St. Benny the Dip*, 1951] had promised us that we were going to make a picture in Spain. We had to get going.

CM: Did you get the sense that Edgar liked the way *Man from Planet X* came out?

Ulmer: He wasn't that impressed, but he liked having done it, 'cause he *wanted* to do a science-fiction of that sort. But we were in such a rush to get it done because that crazy couple was cabling us all the time, the Danzigers.

Babes in Bagdad

Ulmer: We went to Europe on a ship called the *Liberte*, and it was absolutely magnificent—I had a wonderful trip. We arrived in France and from there we took a car or a train into Paris and met the Danzigers, who proceeded to give Edgar all kinds of scripts and ideas. The Danzigers were a couple of Americans who had become very successful...became English citizens...owned the Mayfair and other hotels in London...and now they were producing movies. They were nice, they were pleasant, but they just drove us *crazy* because they'd give Edgar ideas of pictures that they were going to make, and Edgar would prepare them.

He spent six months, after rushing to get there, before finally they got the deal set to make *Babes in Bagdad* [1952] in Spain.

When we got into Spain, there was a problem: I used to be like the go-fer, and [before leaving the U.S.] I had packed all the film and everything we'd need and sent it to Paris, where the Danzigers were waiting for us. Then, when I heard we were gonna be actually shooting in Spain, I transferred it all to Spain. When we were in Spain and ready to go, we couldn't get all this stuff out of customs. You see, Arianné was a junior high school student, and Edgar and I arranged for her studies to be sent from her junior high so she wouldn't fall behind. Unfortunately, amongst the many books that were sent in that shipment was a book called *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

CM [laughs]: Oh, Franco's "favorite"!

Ulmer: Here's the way we got our stuff: We had in that film Paulette Goddard, who was married at that time to Erich Maria Remarque, the author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Remarque had a beautiful home in Switzerland, and Paulette had come over and stolen him away from Marlene

(continued)



Shirley Ulmer cuts her birthday cake on the set of *Bluebeard* as John Carradine and Jean Parker look on.

Dietrich [laughs]! Now Goddard was working for us in *Babes in Bagdad*. She had a lot of clout in Europe, and she went down to Franco. Edgar didn't dare let Franco even know his name, because Edgar had once been interviewed and called Franco "the butcher of Europe." It got a lot of publicity in Europe, and Edgar was worried that Franco would find out that it was him! Fortunately he didn't. Goddard went down there and fooled around with all these big shots of Franco's, and she got a special permit to get the stuff off the ship! I remember that, because we were going crazy waiting!

CM: The other star you had in that movie was Gypsy Rose Lee.

Ulmer: And Gypsy had her son with her. I went with her one time when she went to have a dress made or something, and I saw her naked. I had never seen a more beautiful body than this woman's. It was like a statue, it was unbelievable, I must tell you! And a nice person, incidentally—easy to get along with.

The other problem that Edgar had was, the girls they had gotten together for him were supposed to be harem girls, beautiful girls—and they were. But most of them had hair on their chests! And long hair under their arms and all over their legs. And they were infuriated when Edgar made them shave [laughs]! They thought they'd lost all their sex appeal—back then, men liked the hairy girls over there!

Beyond the Time Barrier, The Amazing Transparent Man and L'Atlantide

CM: Why did Ulmer become involved on *Beyond the Time Barrier* and *The Amazing Transparent Man*, the two science-fiction movies he made in

Texas?

Ulmer: They were done for dough. We shot *Beyond the Time Barrier* at an Air Force base, and that's interesting in my memory banks because we had to wear special badges and we were body-searched going and coming from work at the base. Remember the old saying, "If you don't like the weather in Texas, wait a half-hour, it'll change"? It was always on and off and weather-permitting calls—you never knew what the weather would be. We had a lot of terrible storms. Both of them [*Time Barrier* and *The Amazing Transparent Man*] were made quickly.

CM: Were things touch-and-go financially throughout Edgar's whole career?

Ulmer: Well, until we made *Carnegie Hall*, yes; I think [*Carnegie Hall* producer] Boris Morros saw to it that we had dough.

CM: There was a rumor that Ulmer did not direct all of *Amazing Transparent Man*.

Ulmer: He directed the whole thing. In fact, he stayed in Texas no longer than I did—he sent me and Arianné home and he stayed on there, because he did his first cut down there. Douglas Kennedy, who played the invisible man in that, was a gentleman and Marguerite Chapman was a very nice, simple lady.

CM: What do you remember shooting *L'Atlantide* in Italy?

Ulmer: When we started, Frank Borzage was supposed to direct it, Edgar was a producer and Nat Wachsberger was the money man—he was a big producer in Europe, a Frenchman. (Actually, he was a Belgian, but he liked to be called a Frenchman!) Wachsberger and his wife Yvette [Lebon], a well-known actress, were quite interesting people. We started the picture and we were either one or two days in when we realized Borzage

was so sick, he could hardly hold his head up. I was helping him the best I could, but I didn't know what to do about it—he was really in terrible shape. When Wachsberger came to visit us on the set, he saw what we were up against and he had a conversation with Mrs. Borzage and she agreed, and Frank Borzage retired. He never did another thing, he died shortly after. It was very sad—it was awful.

CM: How much of the picture had he directed?

Ulmer: There was nothing in the camera, really—a couple of long shots done on the beach. We were just marking time until Wachsberger came and did something about it. Anyhow, we did it, and it was interesting. It was a tough picture to make, but it was interesting.

CM: Why tough?

Ulmer: Under the circumstances, we were all pretty shook up about Borzage. But I think Edgar did a very good job, a *splendid* job on that picture. I remember Arianné [the movie's dialogue coach] teaching Jean-Louis Trintignant the dialogue phonetically—he didn't speak English. But he was awfully good-looking [laughs]!

CM: What happened to Borzage got hushed up. The trade papers said he couldn't direct *L'Atlantide* because of the "language barrier."

Ulmer: Well, his wife didn't want that publicity, because he wouldn't get any more work. Which he didn't and shouldn't have gotten—he was a sick man.

The Cavern

CM: Ulmer's last feature was *The Cavern*, which he made in Europe.

Ulmer: We had a good cast in *The Cavern*. Brian Aherne was in it and he was *really* excellent, and if you ever read his autobiography, he talks a little bit about *The Cavern*. He gives his sympathy to Edgar—and me, too!—because we were really having a very rough time. In our cast we had Aherne and Larry Hagman, who was a very *amusing* young man who kept me going—who kept all of us going. It was so cold on the location there, and Larry was a drinker at the time, and he had his little flask going. He brought along some instant soup tablets—bouillon—and he made cups of bouillon for all of us, and then he would put something in from his flask [laughs]! It was a Yugoslavian liquor called Slivovitz, plum brandy, and it was probably 100 proof, because we felt it. And it did warm us up [laughs]! So we were grateful to him! He was always carrying on with funny jokes. We also had Peter Marshall, God bless him—he was the steady influence, a *wonderful*, wonderful, decent human being. And John Saxton, who was a nuisance, and who doesn't like Edgar very much because Edgar didn't pay much attention to him [laughs]!

When we all got over there, we met in Rome and we were told, "Everything is set, the dough is in the bank in Yugoslavia. We're off to Belgrade!" We took off from Rome and got onto the train. But we didn't see our luggage—we had taken two or three taxis [to the train station] and one taxi had all our luggage, and none of us had seen that luggage arrive. I was seated with Edgar and Larry and Peter, and I remember Peter was upset because Edgar had rushed us so and he didn't have a toothbrush [laughs]! We had *nothing* with us but the clothes on our back. And we were all pretty hysterical and angry at Edgar about this! We ar-

rived in Belgrade and, my God, there's no luggage. So here we are in a strange country without luggage, with just what we had on our backs.

The Hotel Metropole in Belgrade was a very beautiful hotel, but not quite finished off good. In the bathrooms there were no toilets, there was just a hole in the beautiful marble floor [laughs]! The first activity I recall there was going shopping with Larry Hagman, looking for big tubs that we could put down on the floor and make ourselves some kind of a quasi-wash place. All the store windows had things in them, but when you'd go inside the store, there *wasn't* anything. We were pretty upset. We only found one tub, which became a community tub, going from room to room. And it was winter, the snow was *way* up, up almost to my waist in spots, and very, very cold, and Hagman's booze was very welcome! In the hotel we had a woman who sat in uniform in the lobby, and if we wanted to receive or make phone calls, we had to do them down there on her phone. And when we went even onto location, there were two Yugoslavian officers assigned to us. It was *very* Communistic. We had a maid who had paper in her one pair of shoes because they had holes in them, and she wouldn't take another pair because she would be arrested. Horrible. The people were lovely...but frightened. There was great fear in the air.

Like I told you, the Hotel Metropole had marble floors, and Larry Hagman made a bonfire on the floor in his room [laughs]! He had his family with him—he had two little girls and his wife. A charming, lovely family. (He is a family man, as you can see—they've stayed together all these years.) Anyhow, he was gonna feed his family, and somehow or other he'd gotten hold of some sausages and he wasn't gonna take them outside, so he just made a bonfire in the hotel!

We shot for I would say three, four days, maybe a week on the location, which wasn't far from the main city of Belgrade. And all of a sudden, when Edgar went to the bank, he discovered that the money had been confiscated. And we got the news from others around us, from the [Yugoslavian] crew, that the country had a new minister, the old guy had been booted out, and there had been a lot of changes. And we better get the hell out of there!

CM: Which you did.

Ulmer: They got us onto a workman's train that left in the middle of the night. We left like thieves in the night. And on that train, Edgar had the first signs of what he got later—a small stroke. He kind of half-passed out, he was not feeling good, and Peter Marshall was his "doctor" who was helping him and was so kind. I'm always grateful, Peter *really* helped him—he kept everybody from bothering Edgar while on the train.

CM: The original plan was to shoot it *all* in Yugoslavia?

Ulmer: Yeah. And we were *stuck* now, and everybody was so good about it except John Saxon—of course. He was suspicious 'cause he didn't believe us that we *would* get financed again. We didn't have money there for a week or so, and everybody just said, "Don't worry, we're not gonna stop filming." Only John Saxon gave trouble.

CM: You resumed shooting in Italy.

Ulmer: Yes. Edgar was in terrible shape, and now he had to try and find a cave, which he did, in the Italian part of the city of Trieste. As I can tell you, it was a very nerve-wracking experience. I

thought that Larry Hagman gave the finest performance, not only of *his* life, but of anybody playing a drunken person who's out of control. He was really awfully good, and I thought Brian Aherne was lovely. The girl was Rosanna Schiaffino, and she was very pretty and very nice. Nothing spectacular—she never got anywhere, not like Loren and Gina Lollobrigida. But we thought she might, so we used her. It was all quite an experience!

The Final Years

CM: In the mid-60s, Ulmer finally tried to branch out into television.

Ulmer: That's right, that's why we came home from Europe. And also because I thought Edgar needed doctoring—I didn't know what was wrong with him. He was getting *terrible* migraines.

Edgar wrote 13 scripts for *The Doris Day Show*, for which they didn't pay him. Doris Day's husband Marty Melcher took over, and then Melcher got a stroke and Doris Day's son said he didn't know anything about [the money Ulmer was owed] and he didn't pay him. We had to sue Doris Day and the suit went on for four, five years. Edgar was dead by the time I settled the suit with her for \$3000 [laughs]! I couldn't afford the lawyers.

CM: The scripts he wrote were produced?

Ulmer: Yes. But no credit. The son said Edgar never wrote them, he never met Edgar, he didn't know him.

CM: What was Doris Day like to work for?

Ulmer: Edgar got along with her fine. She was friendly, but with a little ice, *always*. She had a cold nature. But she was pleasant always and on time and very professional.

At that same time I was still working as a script supervisor, for Jacques Demy and a lot of different directors here. I was working at Columbia on a film directed by Demy [*The Model Shop*, 1969] and I didn't finish that film, because I came home late one night and found Edgar on the floor. He'd had his big stroke. Unfortunately, Edgar had a *very* rough ending: For four years, one stroke after the other. He was unable to move, unable to talk. We communicated by my giving him an ink pad and holding his hand, and he would scrawl with the little movement he had in the hand—*very* little. He couldn't even raise his head, he had to be fed intravenously. It was four years of this agony. And he didn't like being in the hospital—he was at Cedars, and when the insurance people cut us off, I didn't know what to do. I went to the Motion

Picture Home, and they said they would take him in for \$400 a month if I would sign off all my belongings—car, jewelry, clothing, *everything* you have to sign off. I had to do it. We got him set up in a nice private room and they were very good to him and took care of him. I took him home every weekend—they arranged for the ambulance and... [chokes up]. Excuse me—this is horrible stuff, it was a horrible time. It was the toughest four years of my life.

CM: You said you had to sign away everything. How did you still have a house to bring him home to on weekends?

Ulmer: The house was *gone*, I had taken an apartment. I had *nothing*, dear—really nothing! But I was lucky to be a good script supervisor, so I got work. Not steady—I worked sporadically. I made commercials, I made a lot of money doing commercials. There was a man by the name of John Hazard who took pity on me—he knew Edgar, and he kept me very busy, at least two, three commercials a month, and in those days they were paying 200, 300 dollars a day. That got me on my feet again.

CM: Are you surprised that, 25 years after your husband's passing, there's still so much interest in him and his movies?

Ulmer [laughs]: I am *shocked* [laughs]—of course! I am *not* surprised at a *few*, because even before he died he had quite a little fan club going. Young people flocked around Edgar, and he loved it, and he told wonderful stories, and I wish I could tell them like he did.

CM: Ulmer enjoyed the freedom to make *his* movies the way *he* wanted to make them—that's a big part of the reason he worked at all these small studios. But would it have really broken your heart if he had been taken in by a big studio and went to work every day and made "bigger" movies, just maybe not exactly *his* way. Would that steady employment really have been a *bad* thing?

Ulmer: I think it *would* have been, yeah. He wouldn't have made those particular movies that *he* picked. Let's face it, no studio would have okayed the kind of films he made.

CM: So even with all the financial ups and downs—

Ulmer: I have no regrets. *None*. It was a man who gave me a wonderful journey [laughs]—an exciting journey, an instructive journey. He broadened my horizons like no university could.■

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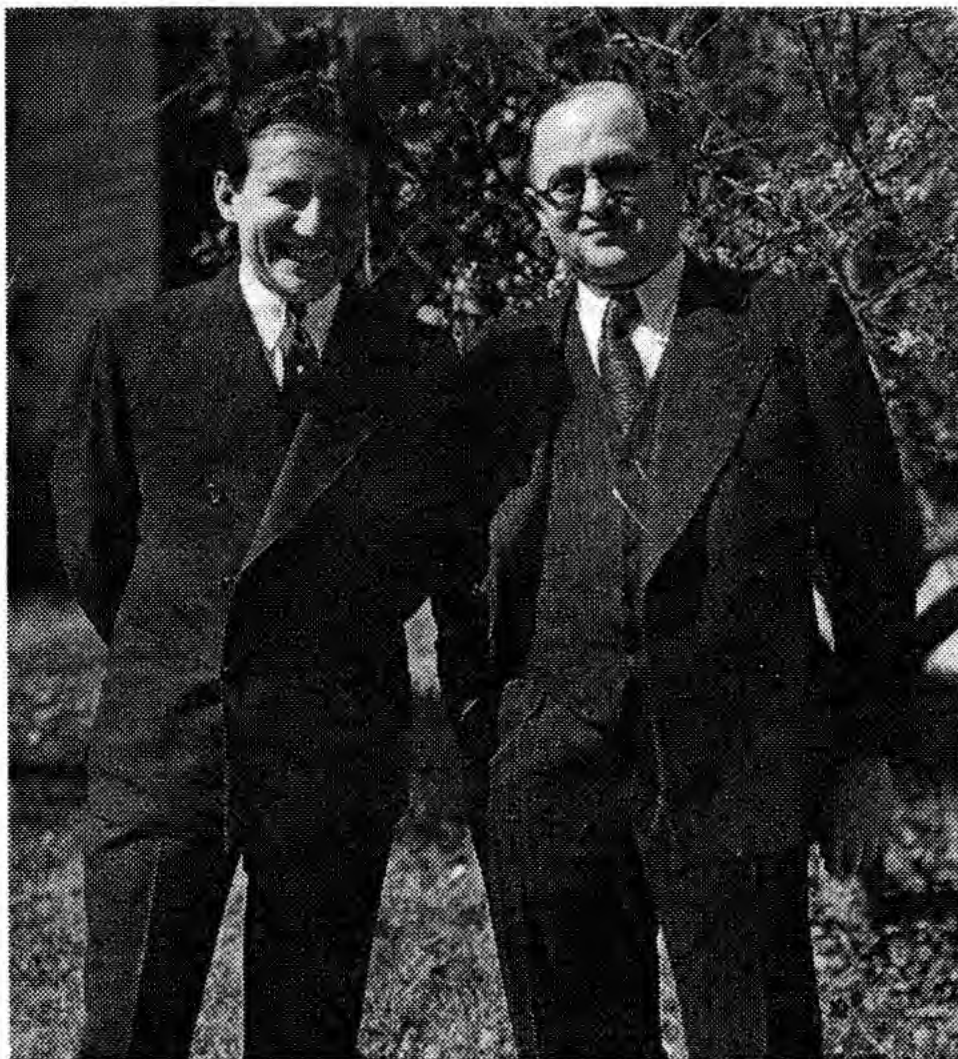
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The Last Days of Carl Laemmle, Jr.



Carl Laemmle, Jr. and Max Friedland

by Richard Scrivani with Milton Wyatt

Everyone interested in movies is familiar with the story of an enigmatic young man who was given the job as head of production of his father's motion picture studio as a 21st birthday present; how he managed to place his name atop a brood of the best loved horror films of talking pictures' early days, and how his star shone brightly for a scant seven years. When Universal Studios was sold in 1936, 28-year-old Carl Laemmle, Jr. could have been on the verge of an exciting new career. Instead, it seems, he simply vanished from the face of the Earth.

In truth, Laemmle was hired soon after by Louis B. Mayer to produce (at \$3,000 per week) pictures at MGM, but found the experience of having to take orders from higher-ups unpalatable enough to elicit his departure before the first picture was produced. Soon after, World War II beckoned and he found himself drafted and serving in the U. S. Army Signal Corps. When the war ended, Laemmle returned to Beverly Hills, spending most of his

time at the race track and throwing extravagant parties for old friends.

By November of 1958, perhaps growing bored with his "retirement", the aging ex-producer surfaced, planning a comeback with an original story idea titled *The Cloakless Agent*, bringing United Press Foreign Correspondent (and original author of *The Fly*) George Langelaan to Hollywood from Paris to work on the script. Laemmle's plan was to make the film an independent production and shoot it with his own financing on a rental lot. Sadly, nothing of this nature ever materialized, and the 50-year-old Laemmle returned to professional inactivity.

It can only be assumed that Laemmle resumed the reclusive lifestyle that preceded his short-lived attempt at a return to the film business, and the story which follows may serve to shine a ray of light, however faint, on the autumn of that life.

Milt Wyatt looked anxiously at his watch, almost 7:30. "Damn, I'm going to be late," he thought. He was being driven by Carol Bergerman, in her car, to an appointment he had looked forward to since 1967. Now on this clear autumn night in 1974 he was angry at Carol's procrastination which was

responsible for his being late for an invitation to dinner and the meeting of his host, a man whose family name had been a part of his movie-going life since before the age of eight. Carol's car made its way to Tower Grove Drive and began its winding ascent to number 1641, a small, modest house near the summit. The driveway ran up another incline and came to an end not far from the front door. Milt got out and looked down from this particular Beverly Hill at the lights of Los Angeles far below. Then walking to the front door he rang the bell. The door opened to reveal a pleasant-looking housekeeper, probably in her sixties. "Come right in," said Elyse, speaking with a trace of a German accent, "Mister Laemmle and the others are at dinner."

It was a simple twist of fate that had linked Milt, a documentary film editor with WNBC-TV in New York, with the Laemmle family of California seven years earlier. His father had died in 1961, and by the spring of 1967 his mother had met Max Friedland, a charming man with a thick German accent. When his mother told him that Max had worked as a European agent for Universal Pictures under Carl Laemmle during the 1920s and 30s, Milt didn't believe it. He checked his 1935 Film Year Book, and under Universal Pictures he found the name of Max Friedland, then living in London, who was Universal's foreign distribution agent. He was thrilled. Some of the most enjoyable films he had seen in his youth were the Universal horror films, and the names of Carl Laemmle and Carl Laemmle, Jr. had been known to him since he could read the opening titles of films. Max had married his first wife in 1920, a niece to Laemmle, Sr. So through this marriage Laemmle Sr. became his uncle and Laemmle, Jr. his cousin.

Later on, Milt became aware that Max was forever indebted to Junior for helping him reach the United States in 1941 while America was still a neutral nation. Having served with distinction in the German Army during the first World War, Max now found himself in a dilemma. At the outbreak of World War II, Max was interned in a French concentration camp as an enemy alien, but with the rise of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, Max, a German Jew, could not and did not want to return to his native country. It was Carl Laemmle, Jr. whose influence and money relocated Max to New York City. Friedland's gratitude grew into perpetual love and respect for his famous cousin.

In the summer of '67 with Milt's mother and Max now officially engaged, Milt decided to take his young son Scott on a trip to California. On the West Coast, armed with Laemmle, Jr.'s phone number and encouraged to use it by Max, an eager Milt made the call. Somewhat surprisingly, he got through to Laemmle himself. The voice on the other end of the phone was not what he expected. Somewhat harsh, with more of the sound, to Milt's ears, of New York streets (even though Laemmle was born and raised through his early years in Chicago) than one he imagined closing business deals in the Golden Age of Hollywood, the voice was cordial, and the two exchanged the expected amenities when Friedland's upcoming marriage to Milt's mother was mentioned. But what Milt was hoping for—an invitation—never materialized. A suggestion to call back in two days (when Milt and Scott were due to return from a trip to San Diego) was all that was offered. Three days later Milt telephoned Junior. This time, the voice on the

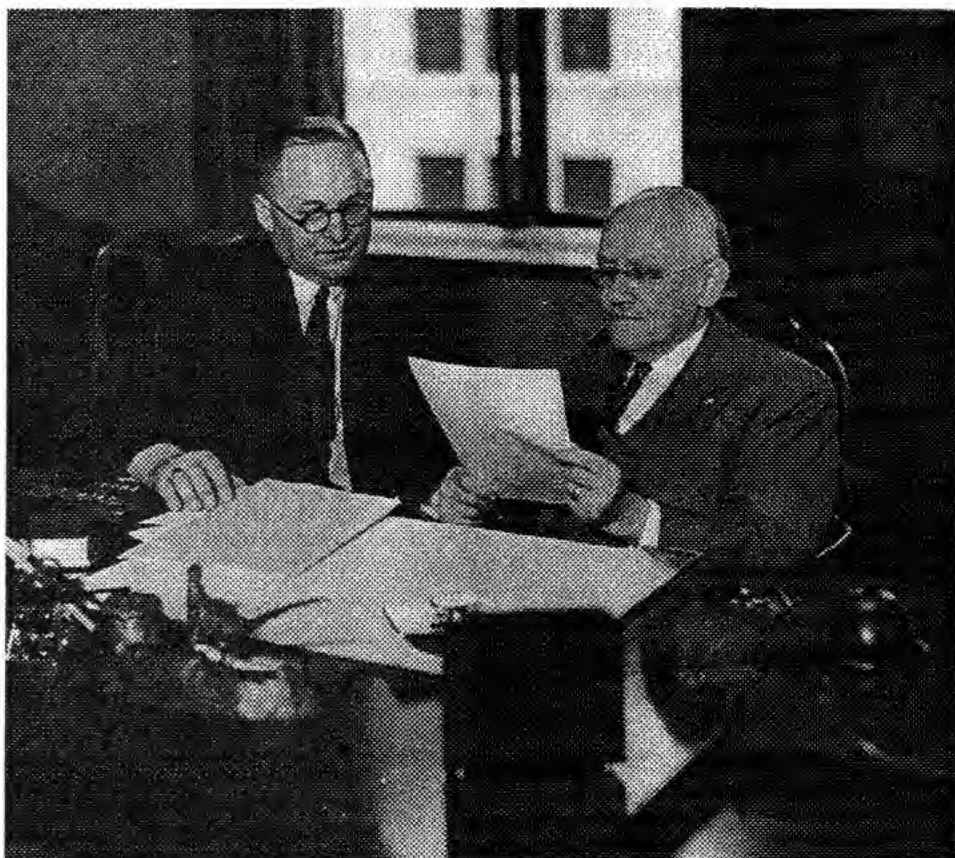
other end was agitated, almost angry. "You said you'd call in two days and you didn't. I didn't think you were that kind of a guy." "I stayed an extra day in San Diego, Junior," explained Milt, taken aback by the apparent emphasis placed on his return call, "but I planned to call you the minute we returned."

"Well, I'm glad you did," said the old man, "because you didn't strike me as the kind of guy who would say he'd do something and not do it." Surprised but pleased that this all seemed to mean something, Milt conjectured that this was a man who had been used to having things done his way. Yet even in the awkwardness of this brand new acquaintance, he felt comfortable addressing Laemmle as "Junior", an endearment always used by his stepfather. The call brief, the parting friendly, the hoped-for invitation never extended, Milt and his son returned to New York.

Milt's mother married Max Friedland in December, 1967. In the Spring of 1968, Max took her to California and eventually to a social gathering at the home of Laemmle, Jr. There she met, among others, French film director Jean Renoir and his wife, and Stanley Bergerman (a Laemmle relative; he married Laemmle, Sr.'s daughter Rosabelle) and producer of 1935's *The Werewolf of London* and the 1934 *Great Expectations*). She later told Milt that her meeting with the famous Frenchman was the most exciting moment of her trip.

The next time Milt found himself in the Los Angeles area was in October of 1974, following a trip to the Orient. He decided to telephone Junior again to say hello, but this time he struck gold. The long-sought invitation to a Laemmle dinner was extended to him, and he was to be at the house at 7:30 that evening. He made a second call to Carol Bergerman, daughter of Stanley Bergerman and Junior's niece. Milt had met Carol shortly after his mother's marriage. They would meet at 6 pm at the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel. The conversation between Milt and Carol in the Polo Lounge flowed easily, and the time passed pleasantly. Suddenly Milt noticed the time: it was already after 7. "Carol, I've gotta run. Junior invited me to dinner, and I have to be there at 7:30." An angry expression crossed her face. "Well, how come he didn't invite me?" she protested, making an immediate beeline for the telephone and returning moments later with an invitation of her own. "We'll go in my car," said Carol, "But I have to call a friend first." Milt had no intention of being late for his first visit to Junior, and Carol was already gabbing away on the telephone apparently unconcerned about the time. "Either you hang up now, or I'm taking a cab," he announced. Two minutes later Carol's car was speeding toward the Hollywood Hills. "Don't expect too much," said Carol, "he's very sick, he can hardly move, has to be fed, and goes to bed very early. He'll probably dismiss us right after dinner." "I don't care," said Milt, "I just want to meet him."

It was 7:45 pm when Elyse opened the door. "Go ahead in," she said most pleasantly. Pointing in a forward direction she continued, "The dining room is right in there." In only a matter of seconds, he would be looking upon the face of a man whose name had graced the main titles of the most exciting films of his youth. *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, *The Invisible Man*... To go on would compile a top 10 list of some of the greatest horror films ever made. The moment had finally arrived.



Max Friedman and Carl Laemmle, Sr.

Seated at an elegant round table with two other guests was a small man with steel gray hair dressed in bedclothes and a robe, and one identifying trademark—the wide smile that Milt had seen in so many photos of the young Carl Laemmle, Jr. Indeed, it was that famous smile that enabled Milt to recognize the man at all. The illness was quite evident. His right eye closed by the advanced stages of Multiple Sclerosis, the frail Laemmle put out his hand on introduction and said, "I'm really glad to meet you, Milt." Apologies were made for being late, and dinner began. The house staff served a delicious roast beef meal while conversation of the most mundane type prevailed. Laemmle's every need was attended to by his male nurse, Jerry, who sat next to him and assisted him in his eating. As an hour passed and the wine flowed freely, Milt worked up the courage to take the subject into more interesting areas for him. During the dinner, Junior had made him feel very comfortable, very welcome. In a relaxed state of mind, Milt introduced the topic of movies, and somewhere along the line asked, "Why didn't you marry Constance Cummings?" (According to Greg Mank in his book *Karloff and Lugosi*, Constance Cummings was reportedly engaged to Laemmle during the filming of *Glamour*, a 1934 Universal film.) Silence. Everything stopped.

"Oh, no!" thought Milt, afraid he might have made the faux pas of the evening, but Junior's broad smile remained. "How did you know about Constance Cummings?" he asked. "Junior," Milt replied, "You're a very famous man. There are a lot of books about Hollywood in the 1930s and most of them mention you. I believe I read in one of those books that you used to go with Constance Cummings." Laemmle's face dropped, and he

said sadly, "She was wonderful. I should never have listened to my father. He wanted me to break with her. I remember the last time I was with her. It was at the Hollywood Bowl, I got into a big argument with her and left her there." It was evident that this was still a cause of great regret to the old man. (Constance Cummings later moved to England and married the English playwright, Benn Levy.) Laemmle went on: "When her husband died I wrote her a letter expressing my condolences. I never heard from her." Milt could sense sadness, genuine anguish, associated with this man's younger years, but he wasn't at all sure that this particular decision was made by Junior alone. Perhaps he couldn't handle the romance; perhaps she ultimately rejected him. It also wasn't hard to imagine old Laemmle Sr. ruling even the private areas of his son's life with an iron hand.

The conversation that followed dealt more with the Hollywood of the '30s, the system, the films. Toward the end of dinner, Carol, who was born and bred in and around the motion picture industry, leaned over to Milt and said, with some confusion in her voice, "You work in television. How do you know so much about movies?" Milt was flabbergasted by the remark. "I've been a movie buff all my life, long before we had television." Milt said to her. "Junior's films left a great mark on me." He had the feeling that she had no idea where he was coming from.

Dinner was over. As Carol prepared to leave, Milt watched as Jerry helped Junior into his wheelchair to return him to his bedroom. A moment later from down the hall was heard, "Milton! Come on in here!" The man who was so ill and always dismissed his guests after dinner was in-

(continued)

viting him into his room. This was an opportunity Milt had never expected or hoped for. Leaving Carol in the company of the charming Elyse, Milt followed down the hall. Indicating a room close to his, Junior said, "This is where Max stays when he visits me." Pointing to a portrait done in a modern style hanging on the wall, he continued, "What do you think of that painting?" Milt said that he liked it very much. "Well, you've probably never heard of the artist," said Laemmle. "She was an actress named Genevieve Tobin." "Of course I've heard of her!" countered an enthused Milt. "She starred in *The Ninth Guest*! [A 1934 Columbia mystery] I saw it as a kid!" Junior's smile widened, obviously pleased that he was speaking to someone with knowledge and appreciation of his era, making Milt feel even more relaxed.

Returning to Junior's room, the mood slowly turned reflective. "I really haven't done much with my life," he mused. Milt shot right back, "Good Heavens! You started one of the greatest motion picture movements of all time, the genre of the horror film! The greatest ones of that period were made by Universal when you were the producer! *Dracula*..." Laemmle's face lit up as he said, "Yeah, I know and *Frankenstein*..." (It amused Milt greatly to hear the producer of *Frankenstein* pronounce the title of his own film as "FrankenSTEEN"). Then with a delightful spark of enthusiasm, Junior added, "Now I know what it feels like to be God!" Milt was confused. "What was that, Junior?" he asked. Laemmle repeated the line. Then, a revelation. Milt cried, "So that's what's missing from the creation scene! I always noticed a jump cut there!" The old man nodded. The stir that that line of dialogue had caused in 1931 had obviously stuck in Junior's mind.

"The first time I saw *Frankenstein* was in 1938," said Milt, "and of course that line had been cut." Milt added to the list, "How about *The Invisible Man*." And again Junior's face lit up as he interrupted, "You know *The Invisible Man* was the greatest, most concise script we ever had. And for years I had Boris Karloff's copy of the *Frankenstein* script with all the notes he wrote in the margins." Immediately Milt asked, "Do you still have it?" But the heart stopping response from Laemmle was, "No, I threw all that stuff out years ago. What good is it?" Milt's mind raced. This icon, this legend in bedclothes in front of him, deserving of the lofty reputation or not, didn't have a clue as to the legacy he had left behind for thousands, maybe millions of fans of horror films. "What good? You know, my son Scott, part of a new generation, loves all of your movies. We have the Universal package at WNBC now and he watches them in the screening room all the time! And it's not going to be just my son, it's going to be future generations as well." The smile returned to Laemmle's face once more, and Milt felt that he had struck a nerve. This was a very lonely man, doleful and self-effacing. Milt had to make him realize that there was no ulterior motive working here, only a genuine desire on his guest's part to communicate to him a sense of accomplishment, more importantly a semblance of self-worth, the realization that his being here had made a momentous impression, and that the aftermath of his work would live on indefinitely.

"We didn't just make horror pictures, though, we made musicals, too. You remember *Showboat*?" asked Laemmle. A short discussion of the James

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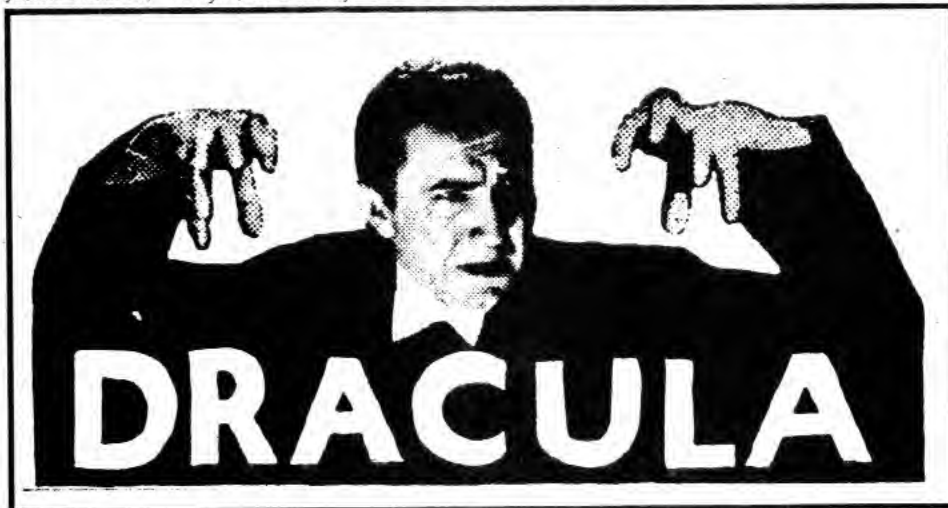
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Whale film ensued. "We even made a couple of pictures with Carole Lombard." [These were *Love Before Breakfast* and *My Man Godfrey*, both 1936, the latter earning her a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award® nomination.] Milt mentioned *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the film that gave Lew Ayres his great break in 1930, and added, "Max told me that Lew Ayres still visits you." And Junior beamed, "Oh yes, he's always here. You

know we won the Oscar® for *All Quiet*. It's right out there where all the paintings are. Go out and take a look." Walking over to a multi-shelfed breakfront, Milt lifted the heavy statuette, awarded to Universal Studios for "Best Film of 1930," and paused to appreciate the man with whom providence had allowed him to spend a bit of precious time. He wished he could have taken the bronze prize home with him, and then felt a bit of anguish over the casual destruction of the Karloff *Frankenstein* script. If Junior only knew what he had so cavalierly tossed away.

Returning to the bedroom Milt could see how tired the old man had become. He stayed with him for perhaps an hour, going on mostly about the movies of the thirties. A "dismissal" not yet imminent, the company obviously appreciated, it took Jerry's intervention to quietly suggest that it was time to leave. Goodnights were exchanged, and on leaving, Milt took one last look—the gray hair, the ever-present smile, the closed eye, the tired face. Hopefully this wouldn't be the last visit. He rejoined Carol and Elyse in the living room. "I've never seen Junior act the way he acted tonight," Carol said as they were preparing to leave. Again she harped, "I don't understand. You work in television and you seem to have all this knowledge about movies." Not trying too hard to conceal his frustration, Milt countered, "Don't you understand? I love movies, and I love those Universal films." She probably didn't understand, but it definitely didn't matter. Half an hour later sitting with friends back at the Polo Lounge, Milt played back the entire experience in his mind like a dream.

Milt visited Laemmle once more, in 1977. Owning to the furtherance of his illness and two small strokes, his condition had worsened severely: he had trouble speaking or even following a conversation, couldn't concentrate, could hardly move. He eventually succumbed to a severe stroke and died on September 24, 1979, 40 years to the day after the death of Carl Laemmle, Sr. The younger Laemmle hadn't thought much of his own accomplishments, even in his active years, and other participants in Universal's "Golden Age of Horror" may have outlived him, but his death symbolically lowered the curtain on that historic era and the whole magical aura of the early days when some imaginative moviemakers, culling from the best of European and silent cinema, and making new rules as they went along, crafted the horror films now considered classics of the screen. ■



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Abbott and Candido: The Untold Story



by Joe Wallison

For over two years, suave straightman Bud Abbott waited for his little pal Lou Costello to rejoin him after their much-publicized split in July, 1957. The former partners shared a great deal: 20 years of entertaining America; thirty-plus motion pictures; an acclaimed radio program of their own; a following on television...

The two men never worked together again. It never happened. Not long after the death of his ex-partner, Bud Abbott, arguably the greatest straightman in the business, was in need of a new

comic. Despite the fact that Bud Abbott was in his sixties (10 years older than Lou Costello), Bud was anxious to perform again in front of live audiences. In June 1959 he announced he would team with Eddie Foy, Jr., but that pairing went nowhere. Not only did Bud need the money, but he simply couldn't get show business out of his blood.

Bud had caught the act of a popular nightclub and radio comedian named Candy Candido, who was appearing at Ben Blue's club in Santa Monica, California. Bud and manager Eddie Sherman stayed after Candido's show one evening to propose a new teaming: Abbott and Candido.

"They tried Mickey Rooney with Bud," says 83-

year-old Candido. "But it didn't work out. 'Cause nobody's gonna change Bud Abbott and nobody's gonna change Mickey Rooney."

Bud and Eddie Sherman's proposal was to first go on the road, possibly do some movies and TV, and Candido would stick to Abbott and Costello's tried-and-true Burlesque routines. "As for the money, I insisted on fifty-fifty," Candido recalls, "and Bud agreed without hesitation."

John Baptist Candido, nicknamed "Candy" by his mother, grew up in New Orleans and aspired to be a musician. When he was 13 years old, he organized a neighborhood band called "Candy's Jumping Jacks" which included a few other adolescents—one by the name of Louis Prima. At 19, he married his childhood sweetheart, Anita Bivona, and eventually teamed with a guitar player named Coco. Candy and Coco played the various clubs in the French Quarter. Years later, his first big break came when he and Coco became part of a newly formed trio called Gene Austin, Candy and Coco. (Austin, an immensely popular radio singer, had hits which included *My Blue Heaven* and *Melancholy Baby*.) This led to nightclub and radio engagements where Candy was eventually spotted by Jimmy Durante and his long association with the legendary "Schnozzola" began.

Ironically, through his work on Durante's radio show in the 1940s, Candido landed an appearance on Bud and Lou's radio program. Candido had a unique talent for speaking and singing an incredible range—from ear-piercing falsetto to a gravelly, deep basso profundo. On Bud and Lou's radio show, he portrayed a vocal coach attempting to teach Costello to sing. Candido recalls that he also sang one of his bizarre, signature tunes, *One Meatball*.

Another claim to fame for Candido has been his career in the voice-overs field, which included everything from Disney characters to matching wits with the master, Mel Blanc, in animated beer commercials. (For Disney, he supplied vocals in many films, *Peter Pan*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Great Mouse Detective*, among them).

In February 1960, less than one year after Lou Costello's death, word hit the trade papers that Bud Abbott had officially signed with a new partner. Columnist Louella Parsons noted, "Candy [Candido] reminded him of his late partner in both appearance and manner... The comedians expect to be active in a few weeks and plan to make both motion pictures and TV."

Weeks turned into months, recalled Candido. "For six months, I drove from my house in Burbank to Bud's home in Woodland Hills to learn the Abbott and Costello routines," he says. "Bud had a smaller house in the back where we rehearsed. He had printed scripts and we watched old Abbott and Costello films. It was to make sure I knew every line and every reaction-of his too. Bud was a great perfectionist."

Abbott refused to perform until their timing was perfect. The pair practiced every look, every turn, every gag. As for "Who's On First?" Candido said, "That was the one I really had to work on." Although Candido refused to repeat any of Lou's famous catch phrases, he inserted his own popular trademark: "I'm Feelin' Mighty Low."

All the while, Bud was being hounded by the IRS "They were confiscating everything," Candido says. He vividly recalls the day Bud slipped him thousands of dollars in cash and one of Betty

Abbott's favorite fur coats to hold for him at his house. "They really screwed him."

Candy's own agent booked a series of personal appearances while Bud's representative, Eddie Sherman, was supposedly searching for film and television projects for the new team. In the dead of winter, in upstate New York, the new team premiered their act.

"It was thirty-one degrees outside," Candido says, "and when we got there, it was snowing like hell. We opened at the Green River Inn, a large nightclub in Syracuse." Because of horrible weather conditions, Candy says, the house was only one-quarter full. Despite the disappointing turnout, Abbott and Candido gave it everything they could and the audience loved it.

After a Christmas break, they started the new year off in Pittsburgh at the famed Holiday House — where two years earlier The Three Stooges made a triumphant comeback and broke attendance records. *Variety* declared Abbott and Candido a hit:

There's good news from Pittsburgh. Bud Abbott is back with a new partner, Candy Candido, and it's as close as it could possibly be without the late Lou Costello. The same routines that made the old team famous are used. Candido doing a letter-perfect impression of Costello and retaining his own identity by doing a spot before this classic "Who's On First?" This is no fare for the modern hip nitery as the boys play it for the clean belly laugh. They use the burlesque method of presenting three different scenes during the course of the show. Each scene is a blockbuster with the "Lemon Drop" bit taking the longest, around 18 minutes. When caught, the youngsters filled the room with their laughter at what was new to them and the adults were roaring at the familiar material so perfectly delivered.

Candido fondly recalls their act. "We did one show a day," he says, "that's all [Bud] would do. We did a one-hour show with me doing twenty minutes by myself."



Bud's way of exiting the stage and allowing Candido some solo time, was via the Mustard Routine. Bud would interrupt: "Ah, Candy, I want you to do some of the songs you did for Disney for the kids in the audience. In the meantime, I'll go out and get a hot-dog. Do you want one?"

"Yeah," Candy said, "without mustard."

From there, they went full blast into the mustard routine. Slaps and all. "I'd never feel Bud's slap," Candy says. "He had a knack of rappin' you and you'd never feel it. He'd cup his hand somehow."

Following each show, Bud insisted on unwinding. There were occasions when he and Candy ventured out into the town to catch other acts. Usually, however, Bud simply preferred the solitude of his hotel room, where he could relax in his

robe, smoke cigarettes, and enjoy his scotch.

"He never drank while working," Candy added. "It was always after the show. He would drink a whole fifth of White Horse Scotch, but I've never seen him drunk."

Next, they hit Detroit, where they performed at a private party for executives of the Cadillac car company. ("It was all men," Candy remembered. "We killed 'em. Especially me with the baby voice and the low voice.")

Candy's agent booked The Boys into a series of state fair appearances. The biggest audience they played for — as well as their most lucrative gig — was the 1961 Canadian National Exposition in Winnipeg.

Abbott and Candido played the farm country of middle America: a fair in Monticello, Iowa. Unfortunately, the show was cut short. "Bud swallowed a bug," Candy says. "It was during the 'Change for a Ten' routine and a bug flew right into his mouth and he swallowed it. He started choking and coughing and I said, 'Gee, you're stupid. I told you not to eat meat on Friday!' And that broke up the audience."

Just as Abbott and Candido were flying high, the act took a nose-dive while aboard a flight to Chicago. With Bud sitting in the window seat, and Candy seated next to him, disaster struck.

"While we're in the air," Candy explains, "Bud says to me, 'Hit me in the stomach! Hit me in the stomach now!' I said, 'You're crazy, I won't hit you.'"

Candido was confused and argued with Bud for about five minutes. "I didn't have the nerve to hit him," Candy says, "'cause I'm a rugged little guy. In the meantime, the captain is walking down the aisle, and I said, 'Captain, he wants me to hit him in the stomach. You hit him in the stomach. I don't know what's wrong.' So the captain reached over and punched him. Ooooh, I could feel it from where I was sitting."

Unbeknownst to Candy, Bud was suffering an epileptic seizure, or at least in fear of one taking

(continued)



over. "So after that, the stewardess came over and poured him some kind of a little drink or something, and then we got into Chicago."

Then Bud dropped a bombshell. "He said, 'Candy, I've got to go home.'"

"We hopped on the next flight back to Los Angeles," Candy says. "We had to cancel out the remainder of our tour. I was very worried about Bud. I had never seen anyone have an attack of epilepsy before. It's a seizure where you're about to swallow your tongue and choke."

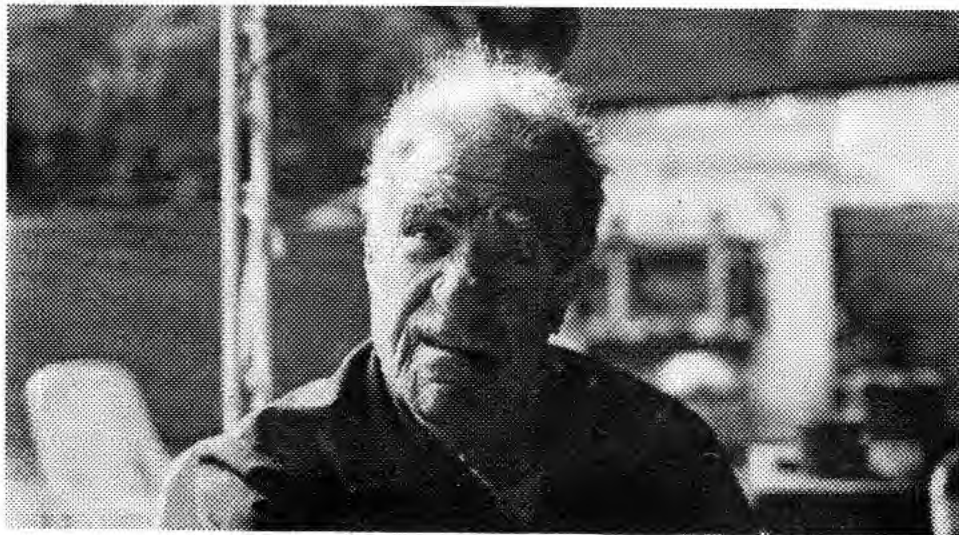
"Bud was scared," Candido says. "The doctors scared him. The doctors told him 'No more.'" Bud Abbott would never perform in public again.

Candy kept in touch with Bud in the ensuing years, and brought old show business friends around to keep him company. Candy remembers: "There he sat, in the chair, wearing the robe, watching TV, with a diamond ring on his finger, smoking a cigarette with the holder, and a drink in his hand — now he's drinking during the day."

Candido resumed his career as a single, becoming an official Good Will Ambassador for countless state fairs around the country. "I happened to be working in Saratoga, New York when I got the word Bud died," he recalled, "and I couldn't go to the funeral."

The saga of Abbott and Candido was short

lived. As it turned out, the team had rehearsed longer than they actually performed. "In the time we were together, the audiences couldn't get enough," Candido says. "I enjoyed working with him. Hell, I practically slept with Bud the three months we were on the road. I never saw him angry. He had a good sense of humor. Bud didn't



know what to think of me.

"He liked me, though," Candido says. "In fact, he gave me a diamond-studded stick pin, in the shape of first base. It represented 'Who's On First?' I still have it to this day."

"What a beautiful man," Candy added.

Joe Wallison is a comedy-team historian whose all-time favorites include Clark & McCullough, The Three Stooges, Martin & Lewis, and Allen & Rossi. He lives in Hollywood. ■

Although the team of Abbott & Candido never got the chance to make a movie together, you can check out Candy's solo film work and imagine what might have been. Here is a sampling of films in which Candy Candido appeared:

1934 *Sadie McKee* — Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone

1935 *Roberta* — Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers

1935 *Broadway Gondolier* — Dick Powell, Joan Blondell

1937 *Something To Sing About* — James Cagney, William Frawley

1938 *Cowboy From Brooklyn* — Dick Powell, Ronald Reagan

1939 *Only Angels Have Wings* — Cary Grant, Jean Arthur

1947 *Sarge Goes to College* — Alan Hale, Jr., Les Paul

1948 *Smart Politics* — Donald MacBride, Fred Stewart

1950 *Riding High* — Bing Crosby, Margaret Hamilton

1950 *The Great Rupert* — Jimmy Durante, Terry Moore

1969 *The Phantom Tollbooth* — Butch Patrick, Hans Conried, Mel Blanc (voice-over)

1974 *Herbie Rides Again* — Ken Berry, Helen Hayes

1978 *Matilda* — Robert Mitchum, Elliot Gould, (Candido is the voice of Matilda, the boxing kangaroo)

The Disney Years — Voice-Overs

1953 *Peter Pan* (The Indian Chief)

1959 *Sleeping Beauty* (The Goons)

1961 *Babes in Toyland* (The Bad Trees)

1973 *Robin Hood* (The Constable)

1977 *The Rescuers* (Alligators)

1986 *The Great Mouse Detective* (Fidget)



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Eddie Gilbert vs. Jerry Lawler
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Pampero vs. Jeff Doney
Bruiser Brody & Scott Casey vs. Kelly Kiniski & The Spoiler
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More Than A Fistful of Interview with Prof. Christopher Frayling on Sergio Leone



Interview by Cenk Kiral
(cenk.kiral@turkey.ncr.COM)

A Fistful of Interview

Cenk Kiral speaks with Prof. Christopher Frayling on the Films of Sergio Leone

A man devoted to documenting the era of the Spaghetti Westerns is completing a biography on Sergio Leone. It's sure to be the most interesting, detailed and profound book on one of the greatest filmmakers of all time.

In the spring of 1986, in the Istanbul Film Festival days, I encountered the book, *Spaghetti Westerns - Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone*. The book was by Christopher Frayling, and it is astounding. I still refer to that book constantly, 284 pages of facts and analysis. Every time I feel I am learning something new.

On October 22nd, 1997, I met Professor Christopher Frayling at his office in the Royal College of Art in England, where he is the Rector. It was our second meeting this year. Our first was on March 5, 1997, also at his office. Like the workplace of many creative minds, his office appears disorganised and carries the signs of his extremely hectic schedule. But, he surely has a system for finding everything he looks for among the heaps of paper. The Professor likes to talk about Sergio Leone, and the years of anecdotes he has collected from countless interviews. At the time of our talk he was concluding his work on the Sergio Leone biography, which will be released around the

spring of 98. With the publication of the book, he also hopes to organise a series of events on Leone, like a season of films exhibited at the Museum of Moving Image (MOMI) in London. You can read all about it in the following interview.

v We know that so far you have spent great time and energy in Leone. Why Leone among many other film makers?

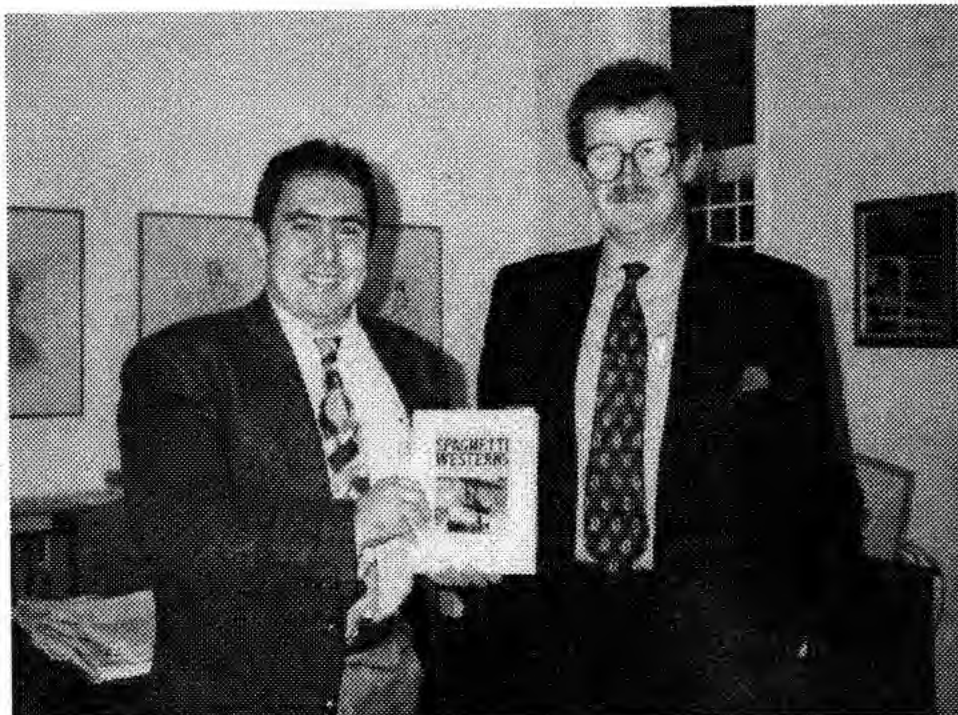
Well, the first Leone film I saw was *A Fistful of Dollars* in 1967 because it was delayed due to the law suits of plagiarism with Kurosawa's film company. They (Kurosawa's film company) got the rights to distribute the Leone films for the Far East, and the irony here is that these films made more money than Kurosawa's own films. So, I saw these films in a very short time period. First *A Fistful of Dollars*, three months later *For A Few Dollars More* and six months later *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. In the summer of 67 when the *Fistful* was released, it was the time of Vietnam, and in England people had very mixed views about America. We grew up dreaming about America as a wonderful place. It was the land of plenty, where everything was possible, consumer goods, electronics, cars, music and etc. There was a big illusion set in the 50s, and partly because of Vietnam, politically people became worried about America. Kennedy was like a god here and he has been assassinated. That upset people over here. A kind of sourness set in. Here is this movie that had a cynical attitude towards America in 1967, because most westerns released so far celebrated the American dream, wilderness

and so forth. Here is this movie saying to us most men south of the border worked solely for cash. Why are you doing this for us? For 500 Dollars? So, it just captured this cynical feeling in England about America.

Where Leone fits in this picture? Well, all of his films are about a European's relations with the American dream. He was born in 1929, grew up in the late 1930s, and for him American movies were like a religion. He grew up watching gangster films. The films he particularly remembers seeing were the films of James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, and westerns of late 30s, like the films of John Ford and many others. Then in early 40s, many of the films were banned under Mussolini's regime. Then, like a lot of things prohibited, they even became more magical. When you are not allowed to do anything, it becomes wonderful. So, bootleg copies of these films were circulated. It became a sort of dream. Leone's father was from Naples, but Sergio Leone was born in Rome. He (his father) spent most of the war in Naples, under a sort of informal house arrest, because he was banned by the Mussolini regime. In 1944, you have the Sicily Landings, and the allied armies came to Southern Italy. That was young Sergio's first encounter with real life Americans. They arrived with bars of chocolates, all these Italian girls wanting to hitchhike with American boys. And, it is a very odd way to meet with your heroes that invaded your country. You have this dream of America from Hollywood and the reality of these troops invading your country. He

said

to me that he got very confused because they (American soldiers) weren't like the heroes in the movies, or they weren't like the heroes in the books. They were tough, rough American soldiers, like any other soldiers. From then on he always had this double attitude towards America. He loved it, but he also hated it. And that comes through every movie he made. The other thing is, when he was a child in the 30s, he was a very lonely person, and movies were like a kind of magic for him. They almost became the only way for him to contact the world. And then, in the 50s and 60s, the movies he saw coming out of America didn't have that magic. What he wanted to do is to make films that recapture that magic that he was feeling when he was a child with big music, big action with an almost child-like view of the world, which also includes his double attitude towards America. So, it is this combination of big, spectacular, noisy, large American movies which is like the magic of the cinema when you were a child. And at the same time, the theme is that 'none of these myths are true'. They are not the heroes of the 1930s. And, I think, when I went to see his first film, I really picked up on that. The double thing that was going on, the magic in his movies. You feel great when you watch them. It is a total experience with the music, visuals, costumes. At the same time, what he was saying about America is that they aren't all John Wayne. Life is more complicated than that. It's tough, cynical people on the take after your dollars and the big rule of life 'make more money than anybody else', all that sort of stuff, which was not like the heroes in 1930s. So, it is the funny combination of wanting a child-like experience in the cinema but with an adult theme. Leone did it very well. He told fairy stories for adults. And I think I picked up on that in 1967. But, it's *The Good The Bad and Ugly* that blew my mind. I said to myself this guy is magic. When you watch his films, you can see the development in the artist, the technique gets more sophisticated, the performances are better, the production values are higher. It is amazing to see how far he came in just three years. He has done three classic movies in three years, which some people do in a lifetime. And the funny thing about Leone's career is that he has done his three movies in three years, and fourth in 1968, then a different movie *Duck You Sucker*, which by the way I don't quite consider purely a Leone movie, then he was back only in 1983. What an odd career!!! Bang, bang, bang, and then 15 years gap. I find it very interesting. So, it's partly the style, partly the relationship with America, and partly the magic of the movies that kept me on him. If you look at the movies coming from America in the mid 60s, realism was the big thing. They were trying to make them look as realistic as possible with overlapping dialogues and a documentary feel to the movies. And here is this guy with a spectacular epic again. So, I really felt in sympathy with what Leone was doing. I also love America but I don't. I love American things, I love thinking about America, I love American movies, but I have this double attitude for America, which I think Europeans sometimes have. I figured it in movies, and there is no doubt that's what Leone was up to. And, there are the titles of the movies 'Once Upon A Time' - a fairy story - in America or in the West. You get this stereo effect, one speaker is a fairy story, the other is brutal and



Cenk Kiral and Professor Christopher Frayling.

nasty. It is a fabulous combination.

v How did the Biography project come about?

Well, I started off writing the *Spaghetti Western* in the late '70s, and it came out in the early 80s. And, I thought I really have said all I have about these films. I've spent a lot of time on that book. It's a long book. I don't think I'd write it same way now. It's a dense sort of book. It took me about three years to write it. And then, in 1983, one day I was sitting in my office at the RCA. The phone rang. My secretary was out. So, I went and answered the phone. I picked up the receiver. At the other end, someone said "this is Sergio Leone." I thought someone was joking with me. He then turned into Italian, and I didn't understand enough of it, and said "I'll put my interpreter on" because he didn't know English well. So, the interpreter came on to the phone. He said "Mr. Leone has read your book, or rather, someone translated it into Italian" - quite a job: 300 pages. I have found out some material about his father, which he never knew. He said "I must talk with you, I am really interested in how you found all this". So I met Leone and we have talked about the part on his father, and I have told him where I have found out the material. He was really excited about the things I found about his father. Then, every time he came to London we would meet after that. So, slowly emerged the idea about a book on Leone's films. I've been in a lot of television programs in the 80s for BBC about movie people. I took the opportunity to reach the people, who were connected to Leone films on the back of these programs. I have spoken with Fred Zinneman about *High Noon* and *Once Upon a Time in the West*, I spoke with Charlton Heston about *Ben Hur*, on which Leone was the assistant director. Leone died in 1989. I had nearly finished the book on his films, but then at that point, I said this has got to turn into a biography, because no one has published Leone's life. Now he has died. Someone ought to do it soon, and talk with these people. Because if no one does it, and speak with these

people, they will go away, everyone will forget. So, I started again in 1989 to organize a life story. So, I have the films and also the life story put together. That's why it's a huge book. The publisher has been very patient. I started off in 1989. It's now 1997 and just finishing. It's really become huge. In those days it was 60,000, and now it's 350,000 words. This is a long book, about 500 pages. It's the biggest book I've ever written. It's like a Leone movie. It starts like a small film and gets bigger, bigger and bigger. In the meantime, I wrote a biography on Clint Eastwood back in 1987.

v So, you personally went and interviewed Clint Eastwood as well?

Yes, actually it was in London when he came to promote his film called *Pale Rider*. We spent a lot of time talking about the Italian Western. It was quite embarrassing, because he wanted to talk about *Pale Rider*, quite rightly, but we talked about his days in Italian films back in 60s, and a lot of it goes into this book. Some of the materials, which didn't get into that book got into the Leone book.

But, I didn't realize how difficult it was to write such a book. I had to find out about Italy and Rome in 1920s, the background to Leone's childhood. You've got to find out about the rise of Mussolini, what it was like to live in Italy in 1930s, what it was like being in Rome in the Second World War, what it was like to meet the Americans coming up from Sicily, what was like to work in the Italian film industry in the 50s, when the American epics were made, like *Helen of Troy*, *Last Days of Pompeii*, these sort of films. So, a lot of background research I had to do which took a lot of time. My reading Italian is good, my spoken Italian is terrible. It's an academic disease. You can read it but can't talk (laughs). So, I could read all those materials but when I had to speak with someone, I needed an interpreter, which was quite expensive and took a lot of time. I think I've talked to virtually everybody with something important to tell.

(continued)



Clint Eastwood and Eli Wallach in the Sergio Leone classic *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

v Such as?

Such as Tonino Valerii, Tonino Delli Colli, Bernardo Bertolucci, Dario Argento, Sergio Donati, Luciano Vincenzoni, Ennio Morricone, and of the Americans, John Milius, who was going to direct 'Once Upon A Time in America'. He is a great Leone fan. His (Leone's) family, his wife Carla, his son Andrea, his daughters Rafaella, and Francesca. I wouldn't interview them if it wasn't the biography book, but you need to know the family for such a book. Carla was very helpful.

I've talked with Charlton Heston when I was working for the BBC. There is an interesting story Leone told me which I didn't entirely believe. Because Leone exaggerated quite a lot. He is a sort of character who likes to tell a good story. The more he told them, the more far fetched they became. He told me a story about when he was working on the chariot race on *Ben-Hur*, where he was one of the first assistants on the crew that did the retakes under a man called Andrew Martin, who was the director of the chariot race. It was the biggest movie set ever built, the ancient circus. The director was William Wyler, who had just finished a western called *Big Country* on release in America. Wyler was famous for being a perfectionist. He shot a scene over and over again, hundreds of takes. And, according to Leone, Wyler came one day and said (to Charlton Heston) "you know this shot in *Big Country* that I really didn't like. It's not good enough. So, I want to take it again." So, Charlton Heston said "are you mad? I am in Rome, in the middle of the chariot race, and the film is on release in America. So, what you are suggesting is we reshoot this sequence and put it in all the prints which are already out on release?". Wyler said "Yeah". I didn't believe Leone. I thought this was a mad story. So, later I met Charlton Heston and asked him "I hope you don't mind me asking, but do you remember William Wyler reshooting that scene in *The Big Country* in the middle of the chariot race?". He said "Yes, absolutely. I wore my cowboy outfits walked into the archaic circus in Rome. Wyler shot this sequence again because he didn't like the light". What's

interesting about this story is that, this was the first western Leone saw being shot. He was standing next to Charlton Heston when they filmed that sequence in *Big Country* in Rome in the chariot race circus. Isn't that amazing?

v Which particular scene is that?

It's in the fist fight between Gregory Peck and Charlton Heston. What Wyler didn't like is the cutaway that shows Heston lying in the dust after he was punched. He said the makeup looked terrible, light was bad and everything. So, it is that very shot Heston in the dust having being beaten up by Gregory Peck. If you look very carefully, his hair is a bit shorter because it was a different style in *Ben-Hur*. Amazing!

So, while I was talking with these people, I was checking up on what Sergio told me. All was true in this case. When you do interviews, like this one, it's good to check with other people because sometimes when people start talking, they may get carried away or exaggerate. When in the book someone said something, I've checked with the others. So, I must have done about 30 interviews for the book, read a lot of documents, letters, Italian archives, English archives, film archives. There's a lot of research in this book. There really is. It took me a lot of time. That's how the biography project came about. And, I've got more interested in the man. He was a very complicated man actually. He was a very shy man. When he started making a film, he was a very 'short-tempered' person. It took him time to get to know everyone he was working with, and then he interacted with them. He was very tense to start with. I think probably it's because he grew up being a solitary kind of person. The more I knew about him, the more complicated he became. He wasn't like the big flamboyant Orson Welles type person he seemed. He was, in the public eye, but the inner person is much more complicated.

v In your first book (*Spaghetti Westerns - Cowboys and Europeans* - from Karl May to Sergio Leone - 1981) you keep a sort of impartial and academic point of view, which was some-

times criticized...

Yes, Mr. Garfield didn't like that book at all (referring to Brian Garfield's comments in his book, called 'Western Films - A Complete Guide' - Da Capo Press - 1982)

v How is your approach this time? Does it now reflect your personal appreciation of Leone?

Oh, it is much more engaged and much more personal this time. It is certainly much more enthusiastic. Biography is different than my earlier works. When you do a film study, you have to keep an impartial position. Such as in my book, I was telling about many directors apart from Leone, Sergio Sollima, Sergio Corbucci, and many others. That's why I kept my distance, and did a wide ranging survey.

v Can you tell us more about Sergio Leone as a person?

He was a very intuitive person in film making. His father was a silent film maker, his mother was a great silent film actress. In the 50s, he worked on a full series of movies shot in Rome, either American movies, like *Ben Hur*, *Helen of Troy* or Italian movies. In fact, in a total of about 50 films he worked as an assistant or as a writer. Yes he was intuitive but also was an incredible craftsman. Today, if you want to become a movie director, you want it now. This man spent for 15 years in learning his craft working on other people's films before he was ready to make his own film. Where the technical side of Leone is concerned, he was intuitive but he was also incredibly careful. He knew a lot about cinematic technology. He loved machines, cameras, lenses, all the latest toys you get in cinema. For example, when he did *A Fistful of Dynamite* (a.k.a. *Duck You Sucker*) he was one of the first in Italy to use a simultaneous video screen, where when you film a shot, you can see it on a video screen exactly as you are filming. You don't have to wait for the film to come back from the laboratory. That's very common now, but back in 1970 that was very very new. When they were shooting *Ben-Hur*, he was responsible for constructing a special camera apparatus, which was attached to front of the chariot making all the shots behind the horses at a very low angle. That was Leone's invention. He invented this arm that you put the camera on. He loved the machines, and that came out of his long career of apprenticeship as a film maker. He understands the possibilities of cinema in a way that younger directors wouldn't.

v Do you consider Leone as an intellectual?

Not really, I don't think so. When he went to school, he was going to be a lawyer. In fact, a lot of people get into film industry in Italy through law, usually executives, producers, and so on. He didn't like the law and he dropped out of college and became assistant director. He never went to University to study literature or humanities or whatever. I don't think that he was very well read man. I don't think that he read very widely. His education was visual. He knew a lot about paintings, he knew an incredible amount about the history of cinema. I mean, you read about people who can describe a scene in a film. Sergio would give you all the dialogue. He once described to me a scene from *How The West Was Won* where Eli Wallach plays the bad man, the train robber. When he (Leone) came to see me, he started acting all the parts, and he had all the dialogue between George Peppard and Eli Wallach. He'd remembered it since the late 50s. So, this man had incredible

knowledge of cinema. He remembered every movie he's ever seen, particularly the ones he enjoyed. So, on visual education and cinematic education, he was incredibly strong. I don't think he was literary, an intellectual sort of person.

v But I remember reading couple of interviews where he said he was very much into reading James Fenimore Cooper, Homer and these sort of authors.....

Yes, he knew a lot about classical mythology after growing up in standard Mussolini's Rome. If you think about it, the history was classical Rome. That's all you studied over and over again. And the punch line was that Mussolini was the new Caesar - history as propaganda. He knew a lot about ancient Greece and Rome. Every school child in Italy had to learn these in those days. He also read a lot of American books in the 40s but I don't think he read difficult novels. For example, he knew a lot about American detective fiction, some of which was illegal then. When you read a Raymond Chandler story in Rome in 1944, it was under the counter. This book was not allowed. In the war, in Mussolini's time, America was a wonderful world, the model of freedom, the comics, thrillers, wonderful movies. He knew a lot about that, but he wasn't a deep thinking man. His political side was interesting. His father was a disillusioned communist. And as a communist, he was fighting the regime all his life. His father retired in Southern Italy in 1944, and died in the early 50s. His mother died in the late 50s. So, he grew up in a socialist household. He saw, with great cynicism, Italian politics in 50s and 60s, an absolute mess. Everyone was making deals with everyone. The Communist Party didn't know whether they were going to make a coalition with the Christian Democrats and all this. And, the thing with Italy was that it wouldn't settle down. I mean they've chosen more Prime Ministers than any other country in the world. Even now they are unstable politically. So, some of his cynicism doesn't come from books, it comes from someone who was brought up to believe in socialism, and who sees that the world around him isn't like that. It's all deals and negotiations. The reason he made *A Fistful of Dynamite* was to say to the generation of 1968 that the revolution was a complete mess. The famous long speech about revolution by Rod Steiger in the film, was actually written on the set. It wasn't in the (original) script. They improvised it the night before.

v How do you comment on the harsh criticisms on Leone when his western films were first released in America?

I find them as typical reactions to an outsider, who makes films about the Americans' history. The first reactions, unjustly in my view, were 'how dare an Italian make such films on our traditional wild west'. I think these things happen when something about a national myth is made by an outsider. Look at the reactions when *Midnight Express* came out in Turkey. I don't of course think of Leone's films and that film the same way, but the reaction was almost the same. But, now things are not the same. In the course of the passing years, some American critics began to appreciate Leone's films. Others didn't. Others still don't.

v When I look at all the relevant interviews, documentaries, even the one you have done for BBC, there are several parts about various actors, Clint Eastwood, Rod Steiger, Robert DeNiro and



Sergio Leone first cast Clint Eastwood after seeing his work in an episode from the TV series Rawhide. It was an episode called Incident of the Black Sheep. In it Clint Eastwood had the big part. So, he watched and Leone decide to cast him.

others. But none of them mentions anything on Lee Van Cleef. Even when you read books on Eastwood, they slightly touch on Van Cleef, but then pass by. There is currently no in-depth book on Van Cleef, his life and his career. Why didn't Leone ever talk publicly about Van Cleef? Is there a particular reason for that?

There is one story, which I heard Leone tell many times, about how he discovered Lee Van Cleef. He never talked really about working with him. He said that he originally wanted Colonel Mortimer, an older character in *For A Few Dollars More* to be played by Lee Marvin. But, Marvin was then offered *Cat Ballou*. So, Marvin pulled out at the last minute. So, they were in trouble. The sets were built, Eastwood was cast, everyone else was cast. They had about two weeks to go. As I say, Leone had this fabulous memory for films. He remembered Lee Van Cleef, not because he was a star, but because he was always there in the westerns in the background. The second bad man from the left.

v Any particular films, in which he remembered Van Cleef's image?

Particularly *High Noon* sitting at the station waiting for Frank on the noon train. He remembered the way he walked, rode a horse, his extraordinary profile, like an eagle. Leone said he looked like Van Gough. Lee Van Cleef would have been a wonderful Van Gogh. So, they went over to the States to meet Van Cleef. It was only the second time Leone had ever been in to America. The first one was to sign up Eastwood for the second film (*For A Few Dollars More*). Leone visits a motel in the West, and tracks down Lee Van Cleef, who was in semi-retirement. When you are in Hollywood, as that book called 'Bad at the Bijou' shows, as a small part actor, it is tougher than it looks. You don't make much money. You can do a bit of TV work, a bit of film work but your wife has to work. You don't live very well when you're that sort of 'bit

part actor'. Actually Van Cleef was then at the end of the career, not the beginning. He had never managed to make into the front rank in America. He was always at the background, always a bad man, always get killed. Killed, hanged, knifed. He was the one who had couple of lines and got killed. When Leone found him, Van Cleef was earning his living as a painter, as an artist. He had stopped making films. He also had a drinking problem. He had a very bad accident, which made it difficult for him to walk. If you look at his films, he walks very badly. His legs were very buckled. His knee particularly never actually recovered from that accident. So, they found him. Leone was sitting in the hotel. In comes Van Cleef, dressed in a big raincoat and wearing boots. Leone saw Van Cleef coming into the motel. He said to his brother-in-law "I don't even want to talk with him. He looks fabulous. If talk with him, I may change my mind". They came with a suitcase of dollars, cash money. They gave Van Cleef the advance on his contract, which is more than he ever made before. Van Cleef rushed back to his wife. His bills weren't even paid, his electricity, telephone were about to be disconnected. And, suddenly they've got thousands of dollars in cash. It's an extraordinary story. In a few days, he was on a plane to Rome. The first sequence they shot in *For A Few Dollars More* is where Van Cleef has the telescope on one side of the street, and Eastwood binoculars on the other. That story Leone loved telling. He often told that story. He didn't say much about working with Van Cleef. Van Cleef was a very professional man. He was always on time. He always learnt his words. He was a real old Hollywood professional. He wasn't the kind of man who got involved in the film making process. He never wanted to be director, or writer. He was a professional working actor. So, he never contributed very much to the films he was in. He did very good performance, he

(continued)

looked great, but, unlike Eastwood, who was discussing the scenes all the time, Lee Van Cleef did just what he was paid for. He wasn't particularly a creative actor.

v Wasn't James Coburn also approached for the same Colonel role?

I heard that Coburn said that. I also heard Charles Bronson said that too. But, I've never heard Leone say these two actors were offered the role.

v How about Eastwood? How did the sequence of events proceed until deciding on Clint Eastwood?

It started originally with Richard Harrison, an American actor living in Rome, who made a lot of Gladiator movies. He was an inexpensive choice, and the producers wanted him to get the part. Then Fonda, then Coburn, then Bronson, then Eastwood. The interesting thing was that *The Magnificent Seven* was a very successful movie in Italy, and I guess they picked their way through that film offering part to Coburn and Bronson.

v I always thought that Harrison was the last one offered, and he recommended Eastwood to Leone.

No, I don't think so. About 3 people told me what happened in that case. In fact, there was the agency, called William Morris Agency, which had an office in Rome. Leone couldn't find anyone to play this part. So, the woman who ran the William Morris agency in Rome said I've got an episode from the American TV western series 'Rawhide'. It's the episode number 113, called 'Incident of the Black Sheep'. It arrived on film. So they all went to William Morris agency's viewing theater in Rome. It's one of the episodes where Rowdy Yates had a big part to play because sometimes Eric Fleming had the big part, sometimes Clint Eastwood. In this one Clint Eastwood had the big part. So, they watched and that's what made Leone decide to cast him. It could be possible that Richard Harrison confirmed the choice. I don't know exactly how that connection was.

v Were any of the films affected by Van Cleef's drinking problem?

No, I don't think so. Originally, Leone didn't want to cast him in the *The Good The Bad and The Ugly*. He thought that everyone would have memories of Colonel Mortimer. He wanted a rather different character. 'The Bad' was a younger man with darker hair. He's a very bad man, completely evil. He (Leone) was worried that Colonel Mortimer was really quite a decent man. He avenges his sister. He was worried that no one would believe that Van Cleef was a really really bad guy in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. He (Van Cleef) wasn't originally going to play the bad man.

v Who was going to play it?

Again, Bronson was offered the part. And, instead, Bronson made *The Dirty Dozen*, which is like the remake of *The Magnificent Seven* in the Second World War.

There's very a interesting thing about Italian film industry. In America, particularly in the 1960s, you're only as good as your last movie. People come and people go. In Italy everyone remembers. Once a star, always a star. You remember these old timers, American actors. When Hollywood had no use for them, they were making a very good living in Italy. Like Jack Palance, Alan Ladd, all these people. Towards the end of their career, they

were still stars in Italy, in Europe. Everyone remembered Van Cleef. I've got a poster from *High Noon*. The film was reissued in 1968 in Italy. It's strange. It says starring Gary Cooper and Lee Van Cleef with Grace Kelly. And yet he has a walk-on part.

The part given to Tuco developed when they were filming *The Good The Bad and The Ugly*, Leone enjoyed working with Eli Wallach so much that he kept giving him more and more lines. So, the part got bigger and bigger and bigger when they were filming. Eli Wallach completely dominates that film. I mean, Eastwood is like a guest star in that movie. He didn't have much to do. In the begin-



Sergio Leone

ning he had quite a lot, at the end he got quite a lot, in between it's Eli Wallach's movie. I think maybe there was a bit of tension where Eastwood thought this man is running away with the movie. It's because Leone and Wallach talked a lot. Wallach spoke a little bit of Italian, they talked together and developed the part. I don't think Van Cleef ever had that relationship with Leone where they talk and develop ideas. He came, did his work and went back to his hotel. When he was making those Italian westerns, he had a flat in Rome, a Ferrari, which he bought. He lived quite well in Rome. But, even then he wasn't very well known in America. His career was sad after the spaghetti westerns. He either made American westerns, which are trying to be like Italian westerns, like *Barquero* or *Bad Man's River* with James Mason, *Magnificent Seven Ride*, where he plays the Yul Brynner part, *Captain Apache*. Bad movies, bad movies. In *Captain Apache* he even tried to sing the theme song.

v What was the real root cause of the break up of the Leone-Eastwood relations around 1966?

I wrote all about it in the book. I won't say too much about it here. But, it was mainly during *The Good The Bad and The Ugly*. Firstly, it was the third movie Eastwood made with Leone. He was ambitious. He wanted to make it back home. All were 'Leone' films. He was ambitious to make 'An Eastwood' film. It was the Leone film where he had the least to do. Eastwood had enough. He had done three by then. He wanted to become a director and an actor in the States. The details you can

find out in the book.

v I guess you mean the quarrels in the dubbing studio?

Yes, and other things.

v When he started his career in the States again after Leone, was Eastwood paying special attention not to repeat a typical Leone film, like not using Morricone's music, the typical Leone style gundown scenes?

No, I don't think so. Every character he has always played until recently was a variation of the 'Man with No Name' really. He was always a loner, vigilante. It was very new this character in the 60s. Heroes always had relationships, families. Here's the guy, a loner, very tough man. He started off in *Hang'em High* trying to turn the vigilante into an American character. Then he had the vigilante in the police setting with *Dirty Harry* in San Francisco. It's like a modern day frontier city. Then he explores giving this man relationships in *Outlaw Josey Wales* with Sondra Locke and Chief Dan George. This guy keeps getting relationships that he doesn't want. He's a loner but he picks up these responsibilities as he goes through the *Wild West*. So, he tried to get a hold of the character, 'The Man with No Name' and Americanize him throughout his career. Yes he didn't use Ennio Morricone, and he didn't think quite the same way as Leone, although there some little touches in his films similar to Leone. At the end of *High Plains Drifter*, when he rides through the cemetery, you can only just see two gravestones. On them are written Siegel and Leone. There is one press still from that film where you can read them very clearly. He knows he has a debt. And he acknowledged publicly at the end of *Unforgiven*.

v Now that Eastwood has come a long way in his career as a director as well, how do you compare Leone with Eastwood as film makers?

Oh dear, that's a tough question. I think Eastwood is more consistent. Obviously much more productive. Leone's whole career is basically six movies. It's a tiny career for a film maker. Leone always wanted the big punch, whereas Eastwood has made tiny changes in his movies. The visual approaches were very different. Leone had an incredible eye. He (Leone) loved paintings. He was a collector of paintings. *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* is full of references to Italian paintings, just like in *A Fistful of Dynamite* he made reference to Goya's 'Massacre of December 3rd'. Leone showed Tonino Delli Colli the paintings and engravings of Rembrandt before shooting *Once Upon A Time in The West*. The monochrome darkness and portraits of faces. Not portraits of aristocrats but ordinary people like his (Rembrandt's) mother, his friends, someone he met in the street. Rembrandt invented the physiological portrait. In that film you can read the person's history on his face.

Another difference between the two is music. Leone and Morricone told me that the music for the last twenty minutes of *The Good The Bad and The Ugly* was recorded in advance. So, the reason the cemetery scene is so beautifully choreographed, so well cut is because it was actually done to the music. And the same for the duel scene. They were walking in time with the music. It's shot like a rock video. But, on that video tape (*Prof. Frayling is referring to an audio interview of Wallach by Bill Shaffer*) which you kindly sent me, Wallach says 'No, I've never heard the music'. I don't understand

this. There's a mystery here.

v May be he was referring to the main title theme.

Maybe. Same is true for *Once Upon a Time in the West*. The music there was also recorded in advance and played on the set while shooting the movie. You see, Leone couldn't speak English. So, what he did was, he created atmospheres for actors. For example, you have a romantic theme playing in the background for Claudia Cardinale. Or, you have that rough theme for the massacre scene. It tells you about characters, you don't need words. So, the music created all the atmospheres for him. There's one moment in that film where the horse was actually trotting in time with the music. It's the scene where Henry Fonda rides back to the train to find Mr. Morton has been killed. It's the trumpet version of the theme. It's incredible. Incidentally, the music here is a parody of Mozart's 'Don Giovanni'.

v Do you think there was a special reason behind Leone's words on Eastwood during the Pete Hamill interview in 1984?

It became a common thing all the time. Whenever Eastwood was interviewed he said he invented all the good things in these films, and whenever Leone was interviewed he said he invented everything. It was almost like a game between the two. But of course, in *Once Upon a Time in America*, for the first time really, Leone worked with a complete different style of acting with DeNiro. A style of actor, who becomes the person he's playing. DeNiro is a fascinating actor. Never gives interviews, very quiet man, and he just lives the part. During the shooting of *Once Upon a Time in America*, he walked like an old man. He was wearing an overcoat on set just like old people who do not want to get a cold. So, when Leone gave that interview, he was working with a completely different kind of actor. He had never worked with someone like DeNiro before. And surprisingly, Leone and DeNiro got on incredibly well. His previous experiences of working with that kind of 'psychological' actor was bad. They didn't hit it off at all. I think that interview was given just as Leone was really beginning to appreciate DeNiro's style of acting.

v What have major Western film makers, such as John Ford thought about Leone?

There's a signed photograph from John Ford in Leone's office. 'To Sergio Leone with admiration—John Ford'. Woody Strode got Ford to sign it and brought it to Leone. They never met in person. But, if you look closely at that photograph, Ford misspelled Leone's name. It says 'Leoni' rather than 'Leone'.

v Has John Ford personally seen any of Leone's films?

I doubt it. When I interviewed Fred Zinneman, he'd never seen *Once Upon a Time in the West*. The next generation coming at that time, who were learning at film schools in the 60s, were completely different. People like Scorsese in New York, Milius in California, John Carpenter, Brian DePalma. It's a whole new generation coming up and they loved Leone. They were showing the last reel of *The Good The Bad and The Ugly* in film classes. And, it changed their lives. The new generation of youngsters, who grew up living and breathing cinema, for them Leone was the top. Look at the opening scene of *Close Encounters*, straight out of *Once Upon a Time in the West*. And,

when you look at the last reels of Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* and even *Pulp Fiction*, the three way duels, they come out of *The Good The Bad and The Ugly*. He's admitted it in interviews. That generation and the more recent generation, Leone was the key influence for action films. But, the old timers, I don't think they knew much about him. Ford was too old by that time. That generation was drifting away from the cinema world.

v How about John Wayne? Have you ever heard of Wayne making any comments on Leone's westerns?

No, but *The Shootist*, which is a wonderful movie, was Wayne's last western. By then the westerns



were't that popular in America. There weren't many produced at that particular time. It was quite rare to see a big budget western when *The Shootist* was made. As Wayne comes out of the distance, the title appears as 'A Dino DeLaurentis Production'. Wayne's last movie was a spaghetti western. It was produced and financed by an Italian. They couldn't find money in America. So, I don't know what John Wayne thought about Italian westerns, but the Italians financed *The Shootist*, which by the way was a great movie.

v How about Peckinpah/Leone debate? I've recently read three books on Peckinpah, and none of them mentioned anything on Leone. What do these men think about each other? - Did they really know each other? - Has Leone really influenced Peckinpah?

Peckinpah said that Leone created the context which made his films possible. He meant by that the new attitude of violence, the Mexican location, the dust, the idea of the 'anti-hero', all that was made possible by the success of Leone's films. So, *The Wild Bunch* was made possible because of Leone. And Peckinpah admitted it. The two men met in London when Leone was preparing *A Fistful of Dynamite*. Leone tried to get Peckinpah to direct the film. Peckinpah agreed, but then he went on to make *Straw Dogs* instead. He (Peckinpah) almost made *A Fistful of Dynamite*. It would have been very interesting to see the two of them together: 'Sergio Leone and Sam Peckinpah present'. That would be something. The thing I don't understand about the books on Peckinpah is that, they are all trying make out he was an artist! So, they keep making references to Norman Mailer,

or Shakespeare, or Herman Melville. I don't think he was that sort of guy at all. This guy had guts as a film maker. You can tell these films are like going to the pub to have a noisy time with your friends. I mean his films are over the top, but all these books trying to claim that he's got a Ph.D. or something. I just don't understand this. I don't get that from his movies.

(He pauses for a moment, looks at me, and asks) What do you think about *Once Upon a Time in America*? You never talk about this movie.

v Of course I will. I started off chronologically with his westerns, and there are just so many things to say about them. I was coming to that film. But, since you started talking about it, let's move on to that film.

I have difficulties with this movie. I think bits of it are among the best things Leone did. I think the music is fabulous, of course. The time shift in that film between the different periods, the children growing up in the 20s, becoming successful gangsters in the 30s, and then the 60s, the elderly man coming back. The way he shifts between these three time periods is incredible in that movie. It's so clever the moment where Robert DeNiro is walking along and a Frisbee comes over his head and a hand appears, which turns into James Woods' hand picking up a suitcase. It's like that moment in *2001*, where the bone turns into a spaceship. 5,000 years of human history in two frames of film. It's a brilliant approach. So, visually I think it's fantastic. Technically it's his best film.

v Did he create these touches in the post-production or had he thought about them before the shooting?

No, they were all in the script. In fact the script was very detailed. It's a very detailed and technical script. Much more technical than usual. He loved the technical side of it. He talked with the cinematographers for hours about how we are going to do it, what sort of focus, etc.

The thing which was difficult for me was the sexual politics of the movie, the treatment of women. Something to do with the difference between a Western and a more modern day movie. The things you show in a Western don't affect people because it's in the wild west and we accept certain conventions of the 19th century and so on. But then in the 1930s and 1960s, it's too real. The rape scene in the car is horrible, it's a really nasty piece of film making. And it lasts too long. It's a rare example of Leone losing his control. He normally knew just when to finish a scene. It (the rape scene) goes on much too long. It's a very upsetting scene. OK, it tells you a lot about the movie, the character. This intuitive, romantic gangster, who is obsessed with the girl of his dreams, so he rapes her in the back of the car. But there's something wrong with that scene in my view. It's particularly brutal because it's supposed to be a romantic rape. The whole film is very dark, and melancholy.

v Why is that so?

I don't know

v Did you ever discuss that with Leone?

Yes. He was very touchy about it. He didn't like talking about it. Because a lot of people criticized him. When *Once Upon a Time in America* opened at the Cannes Film Festival, he had a very bad time. All the women in the audience really didn't like the film. He never had that before. The audience started shouting at him at that scene, saying "How

(continued)

could you do this, it's disgusting". Some even walked out. He was very touchy about this. It's one reason why the last chapter of the book has taken me so long. Because I've seen that film a lot. I've got very deeply in to it now. And I still find it hard to take it. The first five minutes of the film are incredibly violent. It starts with the most brutal scene Leone ever made. You've got three gangsters, baddies, coming in, shooting the girl in her breasts, which does not kill her and they shoot her again. There are bullet holes on the bed. Then, you've got Fat Moe up in the gym. They put the gun inside his mouth. They move towards the left, and shoot the punch bag. You think that they shot him in the head, blood everywhere. It's horrible. Really nasty. And, Leone isn't bloody usually. It's not his style. But, suddenly there's blood everywhere. OK, it's the Tarantino effect. It shocks you into concentrating. You get really tense. But after that actually there isn't much violence. It's all in that first five minutes. So, it's an odd film. I think, probably, because he was planning it for so long. He started planning that film right after *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. His first version of *Once Upon A Time in America*, as an idea, was evolved in 1967. And, he lived with this project from 1967 through to 1983. And, a lot had changed in the society in that time. Attitudes to women, attitudes to the environment. A lot of things changed and different attitudes arrived. I don't think he changed. He lived with that project for too long. There's something out of time with that film. That's what upset people. He was making a 60s movie in the 80s. And, that's what makes it upsetting. That brutality you get in the 60s, a special kind of cruelty. You know what I mean? There's also another scene in that movie, again involving the woman, played by Elizabeth McGovern. She's become an actress in New York. We are now in the 1960s, and he (Noodles) hasn't met her since the 1930s. She hasn't aged at all. Everyone else has got old. That's the only scene in a Leone film that I've ever watched where the audience was laughing, because they thought it was so bad. He (Leone) was trying to make a point that she was an eternal beauty. In Noodles' eyes she hasn't changed. But it doesn't work. It's a very subtle thing to do that. It just seemed that someone didn't have very good makeup. The audience was laughing. It's an embarrassment in a way. You shouldn't get that in a Leone picture. But, on the other hand, the good things about the movie, the music for it was written seven years before it was filmed. That has to be a record. Leone has put everything into that film. His whole life was in there. He had a heart attack during the battle over the movie. He had his first heart attack when the studio people saw it and decided to cut it down. The American version is completely different. They put it into chronological sequence. They cut out all the time shifts. They start off with the childhood, then 1930s, then the 60s. It's completely different. It's terrible. It's recut by the man who edited *Police Academy-II*. This masterpiece was butchered. It was too much for Leone. He had his first heart attack. He said to me he was 90% happy with *Once Upon A Time in the West*, and he was 99% happy with *Once Upon A Time in America*. "Almost perfect" he said, which surprised me.

v How long did it take to shoot the film?

They shot it in one year. Actual shooting time. The locations are incredible in that film. The se-

quence where Noodles takes Elizabeth McGovern for the evening to the restaurant was shot in Venice. The railway station sequence, where McGovern goes off to Hollywood was shot in Paris. The sequence at the beginning was shot in Rome. The sequence where Noodles drives the car from the pier into the water was shot in Montreal. The sequence in the lower East side of New York was shot in the lower East side. This movie was shot all over the place. Each time a new crew. Elaborate sort of routine. It must have been incredibly complicated to make.

v Was the film made within the promised budget?



Robert DeNiro in *Once Upon A Time in America*.

It missed by a mile. It costs somewhere in the region of four times as much as they originally thought, then they had to cut out a lot. It was basically planned as 10 million Dollars. It cost about 40 million.

v Apart from this film, was Leone faithful to his promised budgets?

He was very professional from that point of view. As I say, he had to cut out a lot from *Once Upon A Time in America*. The film was originally going to open with a different scene. It was a great idea, but it was too expensive. It was to begin with Robert DeNiro in a truck waiting at a level crossing at a railway line, and a train is going by. On the train is a car transporter with all these Ford cars on their way from Detroit to New York, going from right to left. Then a train comes the other way. It's a 1960s train with 1960s cars on their way to Detroit. The camera comes back, and Robert DeNiro is sitting in a 1960s car. In the background, behind the train, in the first part of the scene, it's open fields. And then, as the second train goes by, it's all 1960s housing developments. He was going to do this in one shot. So, the crane was going to start with DeNiro on one side of the tracks. And the crane would go up as the train goes by. Over the top you see the field. The crane comes back and the train is going through. Fantastic idea for a shot. One shot, and then it says *Once Upon A Time in America*. But it was too complicated and expensive. Instead, you get some rather dull credit titles.

v How about his planned project about the siege of Leningrad?

That would have been unbelievably expensive. He was going to reconstruct the whole of Leningrad during the siege in the Second World War. It's the story of an American photographer, probably played by Robert DeNiro, and a Russian girl, having an affair. What's interesting about that is you can see in *Once Upon A Time in America*, human relationships are becoming more important to Leone in his films. There's this man desperately in love with this girl, and he changes his entire life. There's an emphasis on personal relationships which you never get in his westerns. The heart of the Leningrad film was to be this love affair. Leone was definitely changing. He was going to be a different kind of movie maker. Relationships, emotions, and characters who develop because of their experiences. You don't get that in the Westerns at all. There, they are icons.

v And based on Shostakovich's 7th Symphony, I guess...

Yes. Morricone has rearranged it for the movie. I don't think he recorded it but he scored it. Leone persuaded the money people that this was to be the first Soviet/American/Italian co-production. He was a brilliant theatrical story teller with hand movements and everything. He went to Moscow and told the story in the mid 80s. Remember we were still in the days of the Cold War. He didn't write it, he told the story. He also went to Hollywood and told the story, and came to Italy. As a result, he raised about 100 million dollars without writing a single word of the script. That's an incredible achievement. Just with his sheer personal magnetism, telling the story. But, it was never made. And it never will be.

v Was he thinking about making a last western?

Yes he was. You've got to read the book. I have the treatment. His last script. It was to have starred Richard Gere and Mickey Rourke. Two brothers in the American Civil War. One is wearing gray, one is wearing blue.

v How about his famous project of Sancho Panza and Don Quixote in modern day?

He was going to make it in the 1960s, and he talked a lot about it, also in the 70s. He came back to talking about it towards the end of his life. It's a great idea, wonderful idea. You can imagine Eli Wallach as Sancho Panza, Clint Eastwood as Don Quixote. That contrast. Loud, noisy, fat, eating, belching, swearing sort of man and the silent, tall knight.

It's all in the book. Also in the book you'll find out the sequences Leone directed in *My Name is Nobody*, and the one sequence he directed in the sequel film to that, called *No body is the Greatest* (a.k.a. *The Genius*). I can't tell you every thing. You must read the book.

The other thing no body knows about Leone, which I've gone into, is that he did a lot of work in the 70s. He produced a lot of Italian films. He produced a film called *The Cat*, which is a police thriller. He produced comedies. Morricone did the scores, Baragli did the editing, Tonino Delli Colli did the cinematography, the same team but he was just the producer. He also made many TV advertisements mainly for French television. I've found most of them. When he was preparing for *'Once Upon A Time in America'*, he was busy. He wasn't inactive, but it is just that he wasn't directing movies. It's that lack of confidence again as well. Every time he made a movie, he was fright-

ened he couldn't do it again. He was afraid that his career would decline in his next film. He was very nervous about it. Leone was timid about making another movie, because he wasn't sure he could do it again. It was really strange, given this enormous talent.

v Is there something in Cinecittà about Leone that people can visit?

No, there isn't anything left. In about 1993, there was a big auction in Cinecittà, which is the final part of my book actually, the last page. They sold everything, bits of the sets, bits of the props, all the decor and everything. And, they sold the western Cantina. Maybe it was the one they used in *For A Few Dollars More*. They even sold the monastery from *The Name of the Rose*. It was the end of Cinecittà, and the end of a great era in Italian films.

v You knew Leone quite closely, even have been at his house. What sort of person was he at home, in his family life?

Very close family man. He was a very domestic, family man. Very fond of his children, his son and daughters. It's very interesting that his household is full of females, very powerful and beautiful personalities. He always lived in a houseful of females and yet this man made very masculine movies. In fact, his wife Carla once said to me that may be the reason why he doesn't have many women in his films is because he got too much of them at home. He was also a great collector of antiques, paintings. He had couple of really beautiful 17th century desks. He liked guns and details. His films show it too. He loved taking things to pieces and showing you the details. He was very relaxed person at home, unlike on the sets. He had two houses in Rome. One is his house and his office. The other is near where he grew up. When he died, someone put up a street sign with blue background and white letters, saying 'Rue Sergio Leone' and put it at both ends of the street on the day of his funeral. As the coffin left the house, all the news photographers were filming it, as if the street was named after him. It's a nice touch. At his funeral, there was somebody standing outside the church in Rome, a German student with a placard, which said JOHN FORD IS NOTHING.

v The book by Richard Schickel on Clint Eastwood mentions about the meeting of Eastwood and Leone in Rome when Eastwood was there to promote *Bird*. And, according to the book, Leone knew that he was mortally ill. Was his health so bad at that time?

Yes, he had already had several heart attacks by that time. If you see the photos of Sergio at that time, he looked very different. We are talking about a man, born in 1929. He's in his mid-50s at this stage. I am 50 now, but this man looked like in his 70s by then. You see the photos, and he's gray, pale, he's a little bit hunched. This man looks like an old man. He really does, after *Once Upon A Time in America*. That film killed him. Most directors leave everything to someone else, like costumes etc. Leone did everything. He got involved so much in all aspects of film making. He didn't look good at all in the photos of these days. He was always overweight.

v So, what's going to be the title of your book? Viva Leone?

I can't make up my mind. It's either going to be called 'Viva Leone' or 'Something to do with death - The life and films of Sergio Leone'. I am going to make



Robert DeNiro and James Woods play lifelong friends who rise to positions of power in organized crime in *Once Upon A Time in America*.

up my mind in the next month or so.

v Are there any messages you would like to convey via your book?

(long pause) I think everyone tends to think that there are two types of cinema. There are art films, shown in film festivals, and there are popular films. And the art films are for the intellectuals, and the popular films are for people who want to have a couple of drinks after the show. One of the biggest thing about his films is that these were films which were very popular that have as much in them as any movie that's been called an 'art film'. I don't believe in the distinction at all. These are art films. This man is an artist. Everything in them is deliberate, carefully worked out. There's nothing accidental in them. This man is a very special, important film maker. That's the big message I guess. In the book, you'll find out a lot about both the movies and the man who made them. You're gonna find out also how much autobiography there is in these films. There's a lot of Leone's life in these films, that people don't know about. Incidents that happened in his life, memories of his own, which he weaves into the story. You'll find out all about that as well. There's much more than you think. It isn't usual for a Western to be autobiographical, but his were.

v So, will you release the book in early next year?

Hopefully. It depends on how elaborate the production is.

v Is it OK for you that I announce this on Sergio Leone Web Site as well?

Yes sure. You can also say that my 'Spaghetti Westerns' book is about to be reissued. I signed the contract for that last week. I am writing a new introduction to it. It is going to be reissued within the next 6 months, with the new cover.

When the Leone book is published, we are hoping to organize a season at the National Film Theater in London, where we hope to show a lot of Leone's films. Italian Film Archives have been doing a lot of conservation work on the prints of Leone's films, on the original film negatives. We are hoping to show brand new brilliant prints of all these films from the original negatives. We will also show as many of the movies as possible on which Leone was the assistant director, writer, or any movie that had anything to do with Leone. It's going to be a huge season. The biggest ever. Simultaneously, there'll be a big Leone exhibition at MOMI (Museum of Moving Image) if all goes well.

v It sounds like exciting days are ahead of us.

Hope so. 'Aim for the heart, Ramon'. That's what I say.

When we are through with the interview, we both realized we got so carried away that, it was already 10:00 PM by then. We both left his office in the Royal College of Art together, and it was apparent from his face that his mind was already occupied with the next day's activities. I thanked him very much for separating this much time from his busy schedule. What we have talked about was already quite interesting. I am kind of anxious to see that bulk of 500 pages. Without a doubt it will be well worth waiting for. ■



Sara Karloff Interviewed

by David Hagan

The release of the Classic Monster Stamps by the US Postal Service in October of 1997 was the culmination of over three years of a petitioning and letter writing campaign that was spearheaded by the descendants of the actors who made those roles famous; Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, and Lon Chaney Sr. and Jr.; Sara Karloff, Boris' daughter, has been on what has to be considered a whirlwind cross-country tour promoting the stamps and the associated merchandise along with the films and memories of her father. Meeting Sara Karloff, it is easy to see that she has inherited the kind and gentle spirit that her father was known for in his private and professional life. Also like her father, who spent many years supporting his acting career by digging ditches, laying streetcar tracks and clearing land in what he referred to as the "bitter oblivion" before his role as the Frankenstein monster, it is quite apparent that she has inherited his unwavering determination to overcome whatever obstacles lie in her way. Most

importantly, it is obvious that she appreciates both the tremendous public support for the stamps and also her father's fans.

Cult Movies: First of all, let me congratulate you on getting the US Post Office to issue the Classic Monsters stamps. I was wondering how it all began and at what point you became involved.

Sara Karloff: Well, to start with Bela Lugosi Jr., Ron Chaney and I met at the first *Famous Monsters* convention in Arlington, VA in 1993. At that time Ron had already petitioned for a set of stamps honoring Chaney and Chaney Jr. Unbeknownst to him the Post Office had already selected Chaney Sr. for inclusion in their silent screen star series, which left Chaney Jr. without a stamp. At that point, Bela, Ron and I decided that in unison we would petition the post office for a series of stamps honoring Chaney Jr. for the Wolfman, Bela for Dracula and my father for Frankenstein. We filed a formal petition with the post office through our attorney. Because I was the one of the three of us who had the time to devote to it, I took on the task

of overseeing the effort to collect signatures and garnish support for the project. We had such support from the media and fans of the movies that the project just seemed to take on a life of it's own. People congratulate me for the stamps but actually the congratulations go to the thousands of people all over the country that made it possible. There is no set number of signatures required; you don't even need to petition. The post office can decide to honor old time cars or anything else at all. I think because they have had success with their Hollywood Legends, they intended to continue with that series and the classic monsters was a natural continuance of that effort. With the number of signatures on the petition and with the amount of letters that were received, I think at the very least we called attention to the fact that the public truly wanted these stamps.

CM: I've seen your schedule of appearances posted at your website. It seems that you've been everywhere this year promoting the stamp campaign. Has it been as hectic as it appears to be?

SK: Indeed I'm everywhere. This is our third trip back East this month. We were in Minneapolis at the Mall of America and it's hard for me to believe that the only thing I saw there was the Ladies Room in Sears. I only got to walk through

Sears to go to the area I was appearing in. Then we went to Washington for the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. They invited me to the reception that was held the evening before they opened an enormous exhibit featuring Mary Shelly's extraordinary work and also my father's *Frankenstein*. They presented the history, concept, and controversial issues of *Frankenstein*. They linked them to the necessity for medical research stressing how important it is in so many fields, especially medicine, to push the envelope to progress. It is a beautiful and interesting exhibit, which will be there until August 15th, 1998. It's very prestigious and my father would be so thrilled to see a serious application of the questions that arise if one really looks at the *Frankenstein* issue.

CM: I noticed in the letter you post to fans at the Karloff website that Universal has written to you explaining that they will no longer license the likeness of your father or represent the Estate in licensing your father's image.

SK: They have denied all licenses that I have sent to them since April of 1997. Licensees who came to Karloff Enterprises first and were approved by me then went on to Universal and were denied the license.

CM: It seems confusing to me that in the year of the Classic Monster Stamp that Universal would want to ignore the publicity and popularity of their own films and stars.

SK: In April I received a letter simply stating that Universal did not intend to license or represent for licensing the Karloff image. I believe they have developed a monster program that doesn't include Boris Karloff or Bela Lugosi.

CM: Will this mean that Karloff Enterprises will be impaired from issuing any more licenses in the future?

SK: It may be more difficult but my rights to license my father's image and likeness are protected by law. We are anxious to work with all potential licensees in order to keep my father's likeness available to his fans.

CM: I was fortunate enough to be a part of the on-line chat you had prior to Halloween at the Universal website and I was wondering if that was uncomfortable at all for you in light of your recent problems with Universal?

SK: I'm very fond of the people in the new media division. They are the same people that at one time had been in the consumer products division, which we had worked with in the past. We have a very good rapport and a good working relationship with the new media group of people.

CM: What are your thoughts on this year and what does 1998 hold for your enterprises?

SK: 1997 was very busy, very gratifying and at times very difficult. In 1998 Karloff Enterprises hopes to develop more art merchandise such as post cards, magnets and hopefully another calendar, which will feature the artwork of several talented artists. We have already introduced several new stamp art related products to our established line; all of which can be viewed at our website.

CM: To what do you attribute the recent renewal of interest in the Classic Monsters?

SK: I think the films have always had a multi-generational appeal and the technology of film, television, and video have made the films more accessible to everyone. The stamps, too, have helped create new interest and awareness in the



Sara Karloff and her husband Bill Sparkman (left) visit with Cult Movies publisher Buddy Barnett and editor Michael Copner.

classic monsters and I think that, as with so many things, they are cycling and coming back into the public's eye.

CM: Your father loved to act on stage. Did you get to see him in any of his stage roles?

SK: Unfortunately I never saw him in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, but I did see him in *Peter Pan* as both Captain Hook and Mr. Darling. He loved doing that. He especially enjoyed the youngsters coming back stage and visiting with him. I also saw him in *The Lark and On Borrowed Time*. I didn't see *The Linden Tree*, which was short lived.

CM: I watched a clip of *This is Your Life* where he was tricked into appearing as the guest of honor. What were his thoughts on that?

SK: He was horrified. He later jokingly said that my stepmother sold him out for a washer and dryer. He was delighted to see Jack Pierce who was his makeup man for the *Frankenstein* movies. He was also glad to see his old school friend and the cricket player Jim Layton, and also Frank Brink, who my father had met while performing in *Arsenic and Old Lace* up in Alaska. Mr. Brink was the man who ran the actor's workshop in Anchorage. They did a very good job of pulling people together for the *This Is Your Life* show, but my father of course was a very private man. He didn't want it disclosed that he had donated money to the actors' workshop in Alaska when they were trying to raise funds to build their own theater. He lived a very quiet, private life and was greatly discomfited by being the subject of a *This Is Your Life* episode, but in the end I think he was pleased and the pluses far outweighed the minuses.

CM: I know your parents divorced when you were young and that your father moved back to his native England in 1959. Was it hard on you when he left the country?

SK: My parents divorced when I was seven. However each of them remarried very successfully and happily so it was a win-win situation for everyone, myself included. It was the best thing that could have happened to each of them. My stepmother was devoted to my father and she took very good care of him and helped him with the managing of his career. My mother married a wonderful man on whom I thought the sun rose and set. He was an attorney in San Francisco, so I moved there and was raised by my mother and stepfather. My father and stepmother remained in Los Angeles until they moved to New York in 1949, where they lived in the Dakota. He commuted to the West Coast for films and in New York did a great deal of early television work. In 1959 he moved back to England where he commuted both to New York and Hollywood. He was in his late seventies when he said to me that he had signed a contract for seven films with American International. He said, "I guess if they have that much faith in my longevity I had better stick around to fulfill the contract." My father thought that he was the world's luckiest man to be able to spend his life doing something he passionately loved and be paid for it.

CM: I know he didn't do the *Frankenstein* role until he was in his forties.

SK: He was forty-five when he did *Frankenstein*, which was his eighty-first film.

CM: I had read in a few biographies that director James Whale was kind of hard on Boris at times. I understand he made Boris, who already had a bad back, carry Colin Clive over and over again for different takes of the same scene. Do you know why Boris continued to make films with him after that?

(continued)



SK: Oh, I think James Whale was a fine director. No one had a clue that *Frankenstein* would make the impact it did or that it would become my father's signature role. Good business dictated that he work with Whale again and I think it was

certainly a wise decision. *Bride* is one of the few sequels that is often considered better than the original.

CM: Wasn't Boris originally against having the monster talk in *Bride of Frankenstein*?

SK: Yes he was. I don't know how he felt about it after the film was made. Certainly history has judged that film very kindly. Perhaps my father's opinion in that particular instance was not right. My father was a very intelligent, well-educated man. He played the monster part with pathos and elicited sympathy for the character. He brought to that role the depth and gentleness that his life exemplified.

CM: At what point did you become involved with Karloff Enterprises?

SK: During that first *Famous Monsters* convention in Arlington where I met Ron Chaney and Bela Lugosi Jr. for the first time. They discussed with me a number of things that they had been involved with, the idea for the stamp campaign being one of them. My stepmother, who had been handling my late father's business affairs, died that same weekend. I then assumed that responsibility and, keeping in mind what Ron and Bela had discussed with me, established Karloff Enterprises.

CM: How can fans of the monsters keep up with Karloff Enterprises?

SK: Karloff Enterprises has a web site at <http://www.pe.net/~karloff> where they can keep up with the past, present and future of Karloff Enterprises. I am very hands-on with all the correspondence from fans. All the e-mail, fan mail, etc. is personally answered by me. It's very important to me that the licenses work for the licensees and that the products are available and affordable for the fans. I very much appreciate my father's fans. The fans of course were the thrust behind making the Monster Stamps go from a dream to a reality. ■



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Cult Movies Underground

By Buddy Barnett

Thanks for joining us for our big 25th issue. Number 25, it's hard to believe we made it. When *Cult Movies* first started, a lot of people would tell us things like, "It's nice, but it will never last more than a few issues.", or "Who wants to read a mag about Bela Lugosi and Ed Wood all the time, you'll run out of material in three issues".

Of course, we always had more stuff than just Ed Wood and Bela Lugosi and after 25 issues, I don't think we've come close to running out of material on either subject. Well anyway, after a number of issues had come out, people would start saying, "You know, your mag is pretty good, you guys lasted a lot longer than I thought you would." We used to get comments like that all of the time.

And then some time later, I don't know exactly when this happened, but suddenly people would start saying things like, "*Cult Movies* is a great magazine. I always new it was gonna be a success." Go figure, but anyway we got accepted into the mainstream. Now I'm not getting a swelled head and saying we're a great magazine, but I am saying that we are a damned good one and I think you are going to enjoy this 25th issue.

Three Stooges supporting player, the great Emil Sitka, passed away in January of this year, he had been in a coma after a stroke for the last six months.

His talent and versatility added immeasurably to the popularity of the Three Stooges work. He will never be forgotten.

Midnight Marquee Press has a new book out: *Son of Guilty Pleasures*. Be sure and check it out, send \$23.00 to Midnight Marquee Press, Inc. 9721 Britinay Lane, Baltimore MD 21234. Gary and Susan Svehla are doing great work for all of us movie lovers, so please support them in their endeavors.

Great news for Forry Ackerman fans: our next issue, by popular demand will be a continuation of our collaboration with Forry on Spacemen and Spacewomen. Brad Linaweaver is conferring with Forry right now for a very special feature on Forry's favorite movie, *Metropolis*. So look for Forrest J Ackerman's *Spacemen* in issue number 26 of *Cult Movies* on newsstands in July.

And a last few comments about Issue #25; there are so many people to thank for the success of *Cult Movies* magazine. Mike Copner and myself could not have done this without the help of so many people, past and present. I'll try to thank as many people as I can. But, I'm sure I will forget somebody, but if I do I will be sure and mention them next time.

First of all the great staff, the people that make this possible: Marta Dobrovitz, William T. Barnett,

Stephen Flaccassier, Kathe Duba, Coco Kiyonaga, Christine Harrop, Tanya Ortiz, Brad Linaweaver, Forrest J Ackerman and great cover artists Dave Stevens and Bill Chancellor.

And everyone who has contributed to or helped and supported us : Lee Harris, Conrad Brooks, Tom Weaver, Greg Mank, Chris D, Frank Dello Stritto, David Milner, Katherine Orrison, Rudy Minger, Bryan Senn, Ed G. Lousararian, Edward G. Barnett, Fred Olen Ray, Korla Pandit, Tim Murphy, Eric Caidin, Jimmy Keane, Greg Luce, Michael F. Blake, Ed and Carolyn Plumb, John and Isabelle Norris, John Agar, Harry Novak, Mike Vraney, Lisa Petrucci, Ken Schacter, Jana Wells, Johanne Tournier, Mario Toland, Matt Swenson, Charles Heard, Ted Okuda, Sara Karloff, Steve Cox, Spider Subke, Jim Singer, Guy Tucker, Jan Henderson, Bob Madison, Brinke Stevens, Steve Armogida, Ron Ford, Kevin Lindenmuth, Kay Parker, Marilyn McGraham, Victor and Vanessa Koman, Rosemary Lingua, Rob Rucker, David Friedman, Raven White, David Lindsay, Steve Tymon, David 'The Rock' Nelson, Hoke Howell, Donovan Brandt, Dan Golden, Albert and Selena Dobrovitz, Sachi Yamada, Gary and Susan Svehla, Larry Elig, Garydon Rhodes, Mark Carducci, Coffin Joe, Morris Vescovi, Karl Thiede, Mary, Johnny, Rosemary, David, Debbie, Johnny Jr., Alicia, Eden, Ashley, Joshua, Brianna, Karen, Kristen, Jeanette and Doodle Barnett, Jimmy Zero, Andre Barcinski, Big Lee Haslup, Stephen Flaccassier, David Skal, Frank and Fannie Dobrovitz, Johnny Legend, Tom and Betty Harrop, Peter Coe, Turhan Bey and many many more. Thank you to all. ■

Scared Topless Fred Olen Ray Plays Guitar for the Movies He Loves!

"Renegade movie producer Fred Olen Ray performs fourteen cutting cuts, inspired by the movies he loved as a kid. The music has a strong early sixties flavor with a solid rhythm section."

— Brad Linaweaver
and Jerry Jewett
Cult Movies



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Jim Wynorski

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Fred Riffs

Scared Topless: Freddy-O and the Hell Cats

Produced by Fred Olen Ray for Zontar Records

Reviewed by Brad Linaweaver and Jerry Jewett

(Note: For help with this review I enlisted the aid of a friend who knows a lot more about guitar than I do. BL)

This compact disc offers a compact dose of music for fans of the late fifties and sixties drive-in experience. Horror movies and rock-and-roll served the same purpose for teenagers who would go out of their minds if they couldn't get out of the house.

"The world could end tomorrow," chanted the parental chorus. "Your father works like a slave so he can afford to build the bomb shelter in the back yard. Maybe we won't be the lucky ones to die; maybe we'll mutate and grow eyes all over our faces, a fate worse than acne. But just in case we don't all die horribly, be sure you don't have any FUN. Remember that there's one thing worse than the atomic bomb, and it's spelled S-E-X."

Family values meant deferring gratification forever. The American dream was to draft sober young virgin males to go off and die in Asia, while sober young virgin females were to save themselves for the survivors. In the days before AIDS, the scare mongers did just as good a job as they do now. As the late Gilda Radner used to say, "It's always something."

For each and every action there is an opposite reaction. Parental paranoia is finally tedious. White music and black music collided, creating Elvis Presley. Movie monsters provided the backup. And the drive-in portrayed the destruction of the world every weekend. Why wait in the face of inevitable doom?

Today, renegade movie producer Fred Olen Ray performs fourteen cutting cuts, a summary both of the movies he loved as a kid and the movies he's made since he grew up. An honors graduate of the Roger Corman School of Filmmaking, he's the right man for this job.

1.) "Scared Topless" We begin with the voice of Linnea Quigley saying, "I'm scared," from the film everyone's gotta see: *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*. The music has a strong early sixties and Ventures flavor with a solid rhythm section. It's a fun tune, lightly reminiscent of Telstar and other Ventures material which relies on the lead guitar to carry the melody. There's lots of cool stuff with the lead guitar, dripping with tone. Rich guitar effects, but tasteful with a curt ending.

2.) "Surf Monster" The more teenagers spent time at the beach, the more horrible monsters rose out of the briny deep to check out those bikinis and save the girls from the fate worse than death. Well, usually the monsters just killed them or dragged them off to Platonic dates. Usually. This cut is pure drive-in movie theme. There's a good professional combo/ensemble tightness. Again, more than a little Ventures influ-

ence; but there's something Western here as well.

3.) "Manila Extract" This begins with the best quote of the show: "There's been a great deal said about the scarcity of truly good men; why, truly evil men are just as hard to find!" The film is *Beast of the Yellow Night*. The theme is simple. Leave a mad scientist on an island for a while and he gets ideas. A lot more philosophy penetrated the heads of the young at the drive-in than ever from the schools and churches. Besides, there's nothing more educational than making out.

4.) "Wild Jungle Captive" This album would be a cheat if we didn't hear native drums pounding with savage passion. Freddy-O is not about to let us down. That's just what we get. Acquanetta fans unite! Musically, there's just a hint of Gordon Lightfoot's "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" in the early part. It's sort of like the Incredible Lightfoot Meets the Astounding Badfinger.



5.) "Tokyo Stomp" The moment you hear the wailing sirens, you just know what inspired this one — even before the album reproduces the echoing roar of the most famous movie monster of drive-in history. Godzilla's coming to town! The lead guitar is slightly thin and reedy, undoubtedly by design. Screaming multitudes and sirens provide the perfect background. Hey, it's not a direct threat to ZZ Top, but it's technically competent. The only way to improve it is with a large greasy tub of popcorn (the good, unhealthy stuff) and a quart of cold malt liquor to wash it down. As the voice reminds us, "This is not a test."

6.) "This Just In" The music is slower as befits the dialogue excerpts from the original *Night of the Living Dead*. Critics of the drive-in never appreciated how much good, practical advice was to be had from horror movies. Where else would a lawman tell the general public what they need to know about bad elements in their community? "Beat 'em or burn 'em; they go up pretty easy." A film ahead of its time.

7.) "War of the Colossal Beat" This is big, heavy music that's just right to honor the kind of giant movies made by Mr. BIG (Bert I. Gordon) and the kind of music Albert Glasser was best at doing. We start with the countdown to the Plutonium Bomb that will transform Glenn Manning into the Amazing Colossal Man. This time there's a larger role for rhythm guitar. The two guitars are talking. It's nicely interwoven with good coordination. Interweaving of sci-fi sound effects is smooth.

8.) "Deviled Bats" Nobody ever did evil in the movies better than Bela Lugosi. He could take the most innocuous line and impart a uniquely sinister quality. So when he had rich, demonic dialogue, watch out! "Your

brain is too feeble to conceive what I have accomplished in the realm of science." Choice Lugosi lines — "dreams you could never guess" — from one of his best low budget corpse fests, *Devil Bat*, run throughout this fairly generic cut. Somehow it's appropriate that the music is similar to what has gone before on "Scared Topless," as is the formula quality of the movie. All is backdrop to Lugosi's barnstorming performance. "When you find out... it will be too late for you!"

9.) "Ghost of Dragstrip Hollow" The turning point for AIP when monsters had to make way for more and more teenagers, this is a musical turning point for the album as well. There's a good dragster warm-up, peelout and crash. The piece is nicely melodic and tightly knit. It even tells a story for anyone who has been drunk in the hinterlands and understands the crazy mentality that leads to late-night, public road, illegal drag races.

10.) "Indestructible" We begin with Lon Chaney, Jr., at his brutish best threatening the creeps who sold him down the river in *The Indestructible Man*: "I'll take care of you myself!" Good ringing lead guitar lines, some moderate to heavy fuzz; but enough reverb that those notes hang where they should. Again, there's very tight knit ensemble playing. Sounds like a tasteful marriage between metal and blues rock. Good thematic variety in such a short tune, keeping to one theme. And as the man on the CD says, "I didn't believe a man existed who could not be stopped by a slug from a .45."

11.) "Big Spooks A-Go-Go" Elm Street has "all sorts of funny business," observes the lady who lives next to a haunted house. Nosy neighbors are always the first to realize they're in a horror film! No, I'm not talking about Freddy Kruger but a scarier Elm Street — the one visited by the East Side Kids in search of Bela Lugosi. This piece of music has an interesting blues-based guitar theme. Is there some influence from Eric Burdon and the Animals? Was Ava Gardner really in *Ghosts on the Loose*?

12.) "Leechin" Fred Olen Ray has a thing about leeches. This cut starts off with a quote from one of his favorite horror films, *Attack of the Giant Leeches*: (The dead man couldn't have been killed by a gator.) "Doc Grayson said the wounds were the kind a squid or large octopus might cause." Regular leeches are bad enough but the giant ones must be destroyed, especially when they take away the only girl in the swamp worth looking at, Yvette Vickers! The music here has a compellingly powerful Ventures influence. Some good percussion hammers home the point. Plus you hear the horrendous sound of a giant leech; you can almost smell the stink of the swamp and feel your flesh crawl.

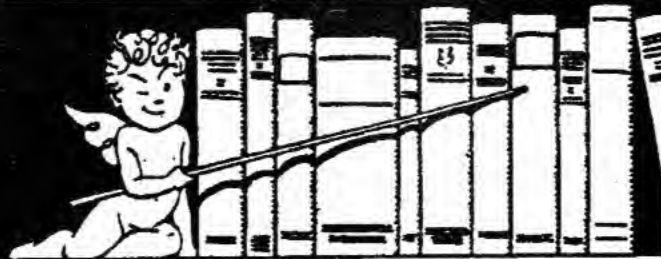
13.) "Eye Izza Zombie" It may not be politically correct, but Mantan Moreland was king of what he did, and he was never funnier than in *King of the Zombies*. "If I ain't no zombie, and they is, what am I doin' here?" The music picks up from previous themes but varies what we hear in the background, like the shambling figures in the back of the room that are just waiting for you to turn around!

14.) "Hooked on Chainsaws" The climax of the album ties in with the cover which features the stunning Michelle Bauer who starred in a role both pivotal to her career and to Fred Olen Ray: the unique *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*. Or to quote the lady herself — "Just keep those eyes closed and leave the driving to us, big boy." The line in question comes from the most musical moment of the film, the ever popular shower cap and chainsaw scene. For *Scared Topless*, Fred chooses a driving, sprightly run-on with the guitar, an appropriate way to summarize this camp classic. Or as the hero says, "This building isn't zoned for human sacrifices."

The sleeve of *Scared Topless* is well designed, with pictures from some of the great schlock horror films. There are shots of Fred with his lady. The tunes are all pretty short which makes this a great party tape. Jim Wynorski says: "You'll love these monster hits from the surf. Ventures move over!"

Can you stand to live without it? Your brain needs this music. Your blood and your brains. ■

Stuff To Read



The Jerry Lewis Films: An Analytical Filmography of the Innovative Comic

by James L. Neibaur and Ted Okuda. McFarland, hardback, no jacket, 285 pp., illustrated; \$37.00.

At long last, two veteran film journalists show the guts not only to claim that Jerry Lewis is funny, but also to write an entire book to prove it. To do so is a brave undertaking, indeed, after decades of listening to high brow critics deliver under-the-belt blows to Lewis and to the French who revere him as an *auteur*. In fact, bashing Lewis's films has become so fashionable that many critics are too scared to admit that he is hilarious, so they appease their guilt by writing clever reviews at Lewis's expense. Lately the tide has been turning, though, and authors James L. Neibaur and Ted Okuda's definitive analysis of his entire body of film work, *The Jerry Lewis Films: An Analytical Filmography of the Innovative Comic*, provides the first detailed, objective recognition of Lewis's unique contribution to cinema, one that is long overdue.

Born Joseph Levitch in Newark, New Jersey, on March 16, 1926, Lewis quit school after the tenth grade and followed his parents' footsteps into show business. He perfected a comedy act of broadly pantomiming the lyrics of popular songs played off stage on a phonograph. During the time he was performing this act at the 500 Club in Atlantic City, one of the entertainers in the show suddenly quit, and Lewis suggested to club owner Paul "Skinny" D'Amato that he give a singer a chance whom he had met a few months earlier in New York.

That crooner was Ohioan Dean Martin, and Lewis promised D'Amato that, together, he and Martin could do "a lot of funny stuff." The first night they didn't, and D'Amato hinted that they might be found at the bottom of the Atlantic. So on July 25, 1946, with no material prepared, the team of Martin and Lewis was born as they improvised for three hours. While Martin exercised his smooth, silky voice, Lewis, dressed as a busboy, roamed through the audience, cutting off customers' ties, eating their food, sticking his fingers in their drinks, and squirting them with seltzer, just to name a few of his zany antics. Instantly they were a hit. After six smash weeks at the 500 Club, they enjoyed another phenomenal 12 weeks at the famous Copacabana in New York. After the Copa, they were booked at Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom's nightclub in Beverly Hills, where Hal B. Wallis's partner, Joseph Hazen, saw them and signed them up for a long-term contract at Paramount.

The authors skillfully analyze these 16 Martin and Lewis comedies released by Paramount, carefully defining and examining the development of Lewis's crazy, frenetic shtick and his innocent clown persona. Their unabashed admiration of the comic never inhibits their critical sensibilities as they judiciously note each film's strengths and weaknesses. They point out the "blatantly self-indulgent pathos" of *Three Ring Circus* (1954) and go out of their way to deflate the overblown reputation of *Hollywood or Bust* (1956), deeming it "an uninvolved, assembly-line product. The comedy is weak and labored, devoid of any genuine merriment or satiric punch." But they are also quick to praise where praise is due, crowning *Living It Up* (1954) "the best of the Martin and Lewis pictures." *Living It Up* outgrossed *The African Queen* (1951), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), and *On the Waterfront* (1954). All of the Martin

and Lewis comedies were, in fact, box-office hits, and the team's personal appearances invited fan adulation the likes of which were not witnessed again until Elvis and the Beatles made the scene.

Most critics, however, have found little of value in Lewis's pictures. As Neibaur and Okuda observe, "American critics, for the most part, have paid little or no attention to his work. Today it is as chic for commercial critics to dismiss Lewis as it is to revere Truffaut, even though critics' darlings like Truffaut, Godard, Fassbinder, and Woody Allen have all been admirers of Lewis."



Although critics did reluctantly offer Lewis some offhand compliments, Martin was totally denied his credit as one of the best straight men in Hollywood history. Lewis told the authors that "Dean's participation became less exhilarating for him because he had so much more to offer than watching me run around and fall on my ass." The team split less than amicably, and it wasn't until 20 years later that they reconciled, when Frank Sinatra brought them together during Jerry Lewis's 1976 MD telethon. The remained in contact until Martin's death in 1995.

The authors' coverage of Lewis's solo films reveals that although Lewis's screen persona usually remained "wild and uninhibited," this persona also became amazingly more complex and enriched as he explored new cinematic techniques and developed his own "free-form style" of direction. Jerry's mentor, director Frank Tashlin, guided Lewis through some of his best solo efforts, including *The Geisha Boy* (1958), *It's Only Money* (1962), and *Who's Minding the Store?* (1963). But it was Jerry Lewis, the director, who gave us his best, most accomplished vehicles ever. His debut, *The Bellboy* (1960), shot in only four weeks at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami, is a brilliant and plotless string of inspired sight gags that Lewis invented each evening before another day's shooting. The film is Lewis's homage to Stan Laurel, who accepted Lewis's invitation to make suggestions for editing *The Bellboy*. Lewis told the authors that he "worshipped the man's knowledge of comedy, so I did everything he said, naturally. I think the film is better because of it."

It is, of course, *The Nutty Professor* (1963) that is

often cited as Lewis's directorial masterpiece. The authors applaud him for "attempting something radically different" because Lewis takes his chemistry professor, Julius Kelp, beyond the "Melvins" and "Stanleys" he had played in the past. With this film, some critics finally broke protocol with their acknowledgments that Lewis was, indeed, a superb clown and director.

Although the authors admit that some of Lewis's films are seriously flawed by self-indulgent pathos and Lewis's sometimes schizophrenic characterizations (an idiot one second, the next a philosophical sage), they also provide a convincing case that Lewis sometimes struck just the right balance of nuttiness and sentimentality, such as in *The Geisha Boy* (1958) and in *The Ladies' Man* (1961).

The authors also exhibit a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of the history of film comedy that keeps Lewis's contributions in perspective. (Okuda co-authored the excellent *The Columbia Comedy Shorts*.) Thus, they evaluate Lewis's formidable value to the genre in a historical context that sheds interesting light on who influenced him and in what ways.

In addition, the authors include a number of helpful appendices that provide comments on Lewis's screen cameos, television appearances, unrealized film projects, recordings, and home movies (starring Martin, Tony Curtis, Janet Leigh, Jeff Chandler, and many others). (Lewis wrote, directed, and sometimes appeared in these 16mm films, which provided him with a chance to experiment before embarking on his "official" directorial career.) Most interesting are two particular appendices, one that lists Lewis's comments on other comedians ("Oliver Hardy was the movies' greatest comic actor and straight man") and another that explains his invention of the Video Assist, his patented video system that allows the director and cast to see an immediate playback of a shot. (Lewis won a Golden Light Technical Achievement award for it.) The Video Assist is now used on every movie set.

It is no surprise that Lewis is wary of authors who wish to write about his career, considering how critics have criminally underrated and crucified him. To the great credit of Neibaur and Okuda, they won Lewis's well-founded trust and respect, no easy feat, so that the book includes Lewis's comments on every single one of his feature films and his break-up with Martin. Most remarkable is Lewis's candor and frequent self-effacement that display a refreshing, vulnerable side to his character that has never been revealed to such an extent before. Moreover, Lewis is his own toughest critic, as he never hesitates to take the blame for his failures, such as *Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the River* (1968).

Neibaur and Okuda also interviewed many who knew and worked with Lewis, including Janet Leigh, Elizabeth Scott, Joe Besser, Fritz Feld, Eddie Mayehoff, and Raymond Burr. Their comments attest that Lewis was a consummate professional, both in front of and behind the camera.

Books about comedians or filmmakers don't get any better than this. *The Jerry Lewis Films* is literate and observant and offers a first-ever objective examination of an American original. For Jerry Lewis fans, it confirms what they already knew - that Lewis, at his inventive best, approaches Buster Keaton and Stan Laurel. For would-be film reviewers, it provides a model lesson of courageous re-evaluation that exists in the tall shadow of a predominately cocky, one-dimensional group of self-important critics.

As a postscript, in July 1996, I saw Jerry Lewis in Chicago, starring in *Damn Yankees*, on tour after its long, successful run on Broadway. At 70, Lewis still looked like a big kid. While he played his role as the devil straight, one could feel the packed crowd's ever-rising expectations for him finally to deliver his film shtick of old. When he did, he brought the house down. In the final analysis, Jerry's audiences have always been the truly perceptive critics of his work.

Reviewed by Mark A. Miller



The Republic serial *Spy Smasher* was directed by William Witney in 1943.

In a Door, Into a Fight, Out a Door, Into a Chase: Moviemaking Remembered By the Guy At The Door

by William Witney. Published by McFarland & Co.

William Witney is one of Hollywood's leading action-adventure directors, with scores of serials, Westerns, features, and television series to his credit. He is also a frequent guest at movie-memorabilia and nostalgia conventions, where his direct and fluid way with words has made him a popular panelist.

Witney brings the same all-in-a-day's-work charm to a new autobiographical volume, devoted to his serial-making years. The hard-working director chose a businesslike title: *In a Door, Into a Fight, Out a Door, Into a Chase*.

This is more than a book about serials. It's a fascinating, close-up look at the low-budget film community "not far from Poverty Row." Witney began his motion-picture career in 1933 at Mascot Pictures, a pennywise action factory. The author takes the reader on a detailed tour of Mascot's office, studio, and location facilities, as seen through the eyes of a bright teenager who was intrigued by the flurry of activity. (The opening chapter, describing a rugged Western-serial shoot, quickly dispels any notions of the movies being a glamorous business.) Witney moved up the ladder from cowboy extra to office boy, to cutting-room apprentice to script clerk. By the time he began directing, Mascot had been absorbed by the new Republic Pictures. Witney stayed with Republic until the studio closed its doors two decades later.

Not everyone who worked in Hollywood was a household name. Witney introduces many unsung filmmakers and technicians whose name will ring a bell with B-movie credits-watchers: Armand Schaefer, Colbert Clark, Helene Turner, William Nobles, Bud Thackery, Hiram S. Brown, Jr., the Lydecker brothers, and Roy Wade, to name a few. Witney also fondly recalls his longtime partner John English, his stunt squad including Yakima Canutt and David Sharpe, and his favorite actors, among them Ralph Byrd, Henry Brandon, Rod Cameron, Duncan Renaldo, and especially Maxine Doyle (who he soon married). They were more than names to William Witney. They were living, breathing people with facets and distinctins that made each unique. The veteran director recalls his colleagues

with clarity and dry humor. If Witney approves of something or somebody, he says so. If not, he sums up the subject as briefly as possible, and he says more through pointed omission than if he had used three paragraphs of invective. At least three cowboy stars may have been silver-screen heroes but were less than sterling around the studio, as Witney candidly admits in a few pithy sentences.

For cliffhanger connoisseurs, the book answers many questions about how certain films were made under grueling conditions, and how those eye-popping serial stunts and gimmicks were achieved. At last the reader can find out why *Robinson Crusoe of Clipper Island* happens to run the oddball length of 14 chapters (a budgetary disaster struck during production, and the resourceful staff eked out 14 episodes to conquer it). Witney was a dedicated student before entering the movies, and it shows in his text. When discussing any production snag, Witney explains the problem and the solution in thorough detail.

Unlike many movie-memoir authors, Witney is almost reluctant to talk about himself. In fact, he claims to have written the book in the third person to avoid being self-conscious. The tone is informal but not chatty, and the author obviously weighs his words without rambling or preaching.

Witney takes his time telling a story, which may be frustrating to the impatient reader. The author establishes a nugget of information, then drops it in favor of a related anecdote or incident. Suddenly he brings back the nugget for a surprising or ironic twist. The nugget is often so juicy that it's hard to wait for the payoff, but leave it to a serial director to build suspense for maximum effect.

Through no fault of the author, Witney's book has rough spots in the text which the publisher's editorial staff should have caught. Several names are spelled at least two different ways ("Mable Norman" should read "Mabel Norman"; "Ralph Oberg" sometimes appears as "Ralph O'Berg"; "Emmett Lynn" is also listed in the index as "Emmit Lynn," etc.) The book has several movie ads and stills, but their layout is unfortunate. For example, Witney carefully leads up to a daring stunt by athlete Loren Riebe, but the photo placement and caption give away the stunt before Witney makes his point.

This book chronicles one man's colorful journey

through the Hollywood movie mill, and it's well worth reading (and re-reading). As a director, William Witney knew what he was doing, and delivered solid entertainment to serial fans. As an author, ditto.

Reviewed by Scott MacGillivray

Dracula: The First Hundred Years

(Edited by Bob Madison for Midnight Marquee Press. Paperbound, \$20.00)

The first thing you see is the blood red cover with a glorious black and white pic of Bela on the staircase, cape raised as if a banner. On the left hand side you see inserts of seven other Draculas: Max Schreck, followed by Carlos Villarias, John Carradine, Lon Chaney, Jr., Christopher Lee, Frank Langella and Gary Oldman. Bob Madison's commentary inside serves as a reinforcement of the cover. Lugosi is the king of interpretations, just as Dracula is king of the vampires.

I've admitted in the pages of *Cult Movies* that after Lugosi, the only Dracula who really works for me is Christopher Lee. I'm not a knee-jerk Hammerhead. I freely admit that it's not only Lee but the entire Hammer product that lent power to his Dracula. Take away Terence Fisher or James Bernard or Peter Cushing, and Lee's Dracula is diminished. In stark contrast, Lugosi doesn't need Tod Browning or Swan Lake or Edward Van Sloan to be Dracula. That is why Lugosi will always be the greatest version of the Count.

Madison is not content to make his case for Lugosi. He cannot resist slamming Lee in the funniest lines of the book. Here's but one example from his commentary on *Dracula, Prince of Darkness*: "The actor plays the role mute, which adds to his performance immeasurably."

The book covers all the other Draculas with a modicum of fairness, not to mention the stuff you've never seen in a book before. There's a whole chapter on Dracula in the comics; and other tie-ins are not slighted, from breakfast cereals to model kits. Writers include Woody Allen (hey, a reprint counts, especially when the subject is rising from the dead), reliable David Skal, Gregory William Mank, *Cult Movies*' own Frank Dello Stritto, Gary Svehla, David J. Hogan and other familiar names. A bonus is reminiscences by John Landis, John Badham, Nicolas Cage and other biggies.

The main subject of the books is captured by the cover: who do you think is the best Dracula? Other vampire films are discussed, but we always return to the Count.

Not all contributors share the editor's aversion to Christopher Lee. New insights are offered for other Draculas. Maybe Chaney didn't do so well in the verbal department but director Robert Siodmak made effective use of the large man as Fisher would later do with Lee. (Frank Dello Stritto grants that Chaney's performance of an undead finally comes alive at the climax of *Son of Dracula*.) The best comparison ever written comparing Carradine and Lugosi is offered by Mank, with a brilliant argument that Carradine was essaying a satanic stage magician. The sexual angle is explored for the umpteenth time by Randy Vest, but he does not have a monopoly on eros when other writers recycle the same bodily fluids.

Which brings me to my only criticism of the book. Ever since that famous writer of weird mysteries, Sigmund Freud, opened the door to mankind's favorite topic, literary and film criticism has been bogged down in a glandular dungeon. The older theological approach belonged to a larger universe. A myth as powerful as Dracula deserves more than a sexual explanation. In an age where religious faith is rare, something big is needed to replace it; and sex doesn't do the job.

What is missing from this book is a thorough political analysis of why Dracula, a blood-sucking aristocrat, is so popular a figure in Western democracies. The one film that did seem to grasp this was *Andy Warhol's Dracula*, but its half-baked Marxist satire only scratched the surface. Madison does mention that film's politics

(continued)

in his comment.

The reason I think Bela Lugosi is the most effective Dracula of all time is tied directly to politics. Not to take away his sexual charisma, or the thousands of letters he received from female admirers, but he was the perfect symbol of autocratic power in a world that keeps rejecting the past without having any clear idea of what should come next.

I would have liked an essay in this book that saw something more interesting than homoerotic tensions between Dracula and Renfield. Instead, we should notice the master-slave relationship that is the ultimate nightmare of middle class Renfield as he loses his little piece of identity and is overwhelmed by a superior personality.

Overwhelming someone else is what Lugosi did better than any other actor in film history, horror or otherwise. He projected an air of total superiority. In his best films, even normally self-possessed people feel inferior in his presence. If that doesn't open the castle gates to a political analysis, what does?

If modern day Americans no longer believe in the soul, then Lugosi's Dracula is no threat. If they only believe in sex, then more ladies will swoon over Frank Langella because he looks like the cover of their romance paperbacks. If the audience only shudders in response to verisimilitude from an actor, then Gary Oldman beats out everyone else, from Louis Jourdan to Jack Palance.

But if there is any fear left in the American heart that freedom is not an illusion, and its removal is a dreadful thing, then Lugosi personifies the ultimate evil. He has contempt for normal people that comes across in all his most memorable performances.

He doesn't want our pity. Why should he when he sees us as slaves or food? He doesn't feel that he is better than the common man; he knows that he's better! Bela Lugosi will always be rediscovered by future generations in those dark moments when they realize that being good and nice and decent is nothing more than a popularity contest, and a plea that the community not drive a stake through your heart!

Reviewed by Brad Linaweaver

The Abbott & Costello Story: Sixty Years of "Who's On First?"

(By Stephen Cox and John Lofflin, 305 pages, \$22.95 from Cumberland House Publishing, Nashville.)

Believe it or not, we've been spellbound by Abbott and Costello's "Who's On First?" for sixty years. The newly published book, *The Abbott & Costello Story* is the definitive retrospective on the personal lives and career of the last of the great movie comedy teams.

Up to now, the few books ever written on the famous comedy duo of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello have been lacking: one is too technical, one is too brief, one is too biased, and one is just too fluffy. And most are currently unavailable. Without question, this book is a rare treat for any fan of vintage comedy, and to fans of Bud and Lou, it may be gold.

It was March of 1938 that a nationwide audience first attempted to untangle the mindbending comedy routine, "Who's On First?" over the radio (on *The Kate Smith Hour*, CBS). From that moment, the baseball routine has become a fixture of Americana while Bud and Lou themselves secured their cult status as comedy icons. The routine became Abbott and Costello's insurance in front of an audience—not that they needed any. Audiences took to their style almost immediately, whether on radio, in films, or on television.

Even today, America's number one television comic, Jerry Seinfeld states: "They are the only ones who preserved an entire era of American entertainment... they were the roots of virtually every contemporary comedian working." The sitcom star has explained more than once, that his Emmy-Award winning show "about nothing" was greatly based on the early 1950s filmed TV program, *The Abbott and Costello Show*.

The Abbott & Costello Story (a highly superior,

revamped, updated version of the 1990 book by Cox/Lofflin, *The Official Abbott & Costello Scrapbook*) covers all aspects of the comedians' personal and professional lives. The good, the bad and the ugly. Chronicling the duo's rise to Hollywood's highest paid stars in the forties—to their inevitable divorce nearly 20 years later, the book delves into their dealing with excessive wealth during an era when a dollar was actually worth something. Take a look at this book and you'll realize that money can't buy happiness. This is the story of the American dream and how it was acquired and lost. Here is the real tale of the two men who gave us so much laughter, all the while whose lives were plagued with trials and tribulations.

Co-authors Cox and Lofflin take a carefully researched look at the tension which ultimately ripped the team apart after a lengthy partnership: both men suffered chronic health problems; the heartbreak of Lou losing his only son at an early age; their addiction to high-stakes gambling and the eventual IRS audit which brutalized both men and nearly left them bankrupt. The whole story of Abbott and Costello is told in the words of many close friends, family and co-workers, as well as through the words of the comedians themselves.



Chock full of several hundred rare photos, this book even includes eight pages of full-color, never before published photos.

The book's chapter on Abbott and Costello's television years is a long-overdue treat. This is a thorough guide to their TV show, which featured a stock company of unforgettable actors and crazy characters. Remember Joe Besser as "Stinky," beautiful actress Hillary Brooke as the teasing neighbor, and Sid Fields as the screaming landlord?

The filmography of the team's 36 feature films includes brief sidelights with little-known facts about the productions as well as a history of their work in burlesque, radio, nightclubs and personal appearance tours.

Two standout interviews profile actor/musician Candy Candido and actor/dialectician Robert Easton, both of whom worked with the team. Candido speaks frankly about his teaming with Bud Abbott after Lou Costello died. Easton takes you behind the scenes of one of Bud and Lou's worst films, *Comin' Round The Mountain*, and provides an eye-opening, honest impression of their rivalry on the set, as well as his observations of Costello's sadistic behavior.

Reviewed by C. Tom Edwards

Women: From Female Scientists to Chainsaw Leftovers by Don G. Smith

(a one-chapter essay in the book, *Bitches, Bimbos*

and *Virgins*, published by Midnight Marquee)

It may seem a little weird to be reviewing one essay from a collection by disparate authors, but ever since I read Smith's article in this otherwise commendable book from editors Gary and Susan Svheila I've been unable to review the book as a whole. That's how angry this one piece made me.

The only solution is purgation, catharsis, metaphorical burning of Mr. Smith at the stake.

Up until I read "...Chainsaw Leftovers," I was certain who should win the prize for the most bone-headed film criticism of all time. Despite stiff competition, I thought John McCarty should win the honors for his incredible thesis that Peter Cushing's van Helsing is the villain of *Horror of Dracula* and Lee's Dracula a helpless pawn of the forces that drive him! That could be the subject of a long article in which guilt by association (Cushing's heroes have traits in common with his villains) is properly labeled as McCartyism.

You'd think that kind of blindness would be impossible to top. How could a critic not notice that God Almighty is on Cushing's side in *Horror of Dracula*? But McCarty is a sharp observer of every cinematic detail compared to the unbelievable perversity of the Smith thesis.

According to "...Chainsaw Leftovers," sexually active girls who are horribly murdered in slasher films are the real monsters of these films. I'm not kidding. He really says this. Need proof?

Quotation time: "The slashers from *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare On Elm Street* continue to live, sequel after sequel, because the danger they symbolically combat—that of female promiscuity—is still alive."

In case that isn't enough, here's the capper: "In the cinema of the seventies and beyond, bimbos and bitches get punished for behaviors which are destructive to civilization, just as the monster did in the fifties. The big difference is that in the fifties, the woman was a help-mate. She was part of the moral and civilized order. In the seventies and beyond, she is the monster."

I could probably stop right now but I am compelled to offer a counter-argument. The introduction by the editors warning that Smith's argument is not politically correct doesn't begin to prepare the reader for what lurks ahead. As a lifelong right-winger, I know all about political incorrectness and that label doesn't begin to describe a genuinely pathological belief. There is no political party for Jack the Ripper, all bad jokes aside.

Two points serve to demolish the Smith case. The first is that a certain kind of victim meeting a predictable end in horror movies does not make the victim any less of a victim. Every funny drunk in every monster film is killed every time. No one ever dreamed of using that as proof that the drunks were the monsters! And no one ever doubted that habitual drunkenness is just as bad for society as any other sin.

The other point is thanks to Smith himself. In the same essay he writes in reference to the slashers that "they therefore live on just as Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolf Man did in the thirties and forties and beyond."

Which means he's comparing the slashers to the traditional monsters. Which means the slashers are the monsters. Which means that the victims of the monsters must be victims. Which means the bimbos and bitches are not the monsters.

I admit that this exercise is elementary logic is published on far more perishable paper (a hallmark of *Cult Movies*) than the demented Smith article that was published on very good paper. But as this page turns yellow and begins to fade, the logic of my argument will live on for the simple reason that bad thinking is always recognized by any who have the gift of reason.

It is not a call for censorship to ask what the Svheilas were thinking when they honored Smith's misogyny with a place in their otherwise excellent book.

Review by Brad Linaweaver

Spotlight on Hollywood



By Eric Caidin

Incredibly Strange Rock 'n' Roll Wrestling
The original concept of "Incredibly Strange Rock 'n' Roll Wrestling" was developed by Johnny Legend, combining two extreme forms of entertainment: pro wrestling and rock 'n' roll. Incredibly Strange Wrestling first began 10 years ago as Hollywood Heavyweight Wrestling. Legend, a lifelong wrestling fan, had always dreamed of starting his own independent wrestling federation and felt the time was right. Showcasing live music between wrestling matches proved a perfect combination. The first show had performances by L7 and featured such Legend created wrestlers as Sister Slash, The Nun From Hell, along with the

wrestling Re-Animators, and up-and-coming wrestlers Konan and El Rey Misterio, Jr., who are now both stars in the Turner WCW group. Also appearing were legendary veteran wrestlers Chavo and Mondo Guerrero from the Olympic Auditorium's famous golden years of pro wrestling. The show was a sellout.

The second show at Hollywood's famous Club Lingerie was the first show to utilize the talents of guest celebrities such as Jason Hervey from *The Wonder Years*. Punk star Glenn Danzig of the Misfits was in attendance. The highlight of the show was the accidental artery severing on one of the wrestlers during a match. Blood flowed like a scene from *Dawn of the Dead*. The police were

called and the promoters came close to being arrested for assault and inciting a riot. Luckily charges were dropped and the matches continued.

Johnny Legend took his ISW group to the bay area and sold out a number of shows in San Francisco. ISW also made successful appearances at Lollapalooza in Seattle and Los Angeles, also at the Music Conference Convention in Los Angeles.

Finally a new home was found for ISW in LA at the Hollywood Moguls. Some of the celebrity guests there have been Sage Stallone managing one of ISW's top tag teams. Other stars seen at the shows were the late comedian Chris Farley (one of his last public appearances), film producers Dave Friedman and Harry Novak, adult film star Sharon Mitchell and WCW's Chris Jericho, just to name a few. Bands featured at recent shows include the Fuzztones, The Go-Nuts, the late Foreign Object (a great punk band featuring former wrestlers), the Bambores and many more top local and out-of-town bands.

The shows at Hollywood Moguls are held every six weeks and consist of an hour and a half of wrestling and three or four live bands. Films and videos of '60s music and classic exploitation films are shown all night in the back room. These are multimedia events that appeal to all types of audiences. Johnny Legend's current stable of wrestlers include: the original Aztec Mummy, Cletus the Fetus Kincaid, The Dianetic Death Squad (Killer Cruise and Tex Travolta), the HIV Kid, La Femme Nikita Koloff, D.T. Dunphy and many more. For future event info call the hot line at (213) 612-5156. See you at the matches.■

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The Official **Cult Movies** Sanity Test — inspired by **The Invisible Ghost** —



brought to you by **Brad Linaweaver**

In Lugosi's Monogram classic of a haunted husband, an utterly mad psychiatrist wanders into the film at the end and shares with the characters and the audience his views on mental health. The doc's theories are quickly summarized: It's very easy to determine if a person is insane! And remember, it is quite common for a person to be normal for two or three months at a time and then go completely insane for an hour or two.

Well, now. After a careful study of *The Invisible Ghost*, I've adapted what I've learned as follows:

- 1.) Do you know the name of your employer?
- 2.) Do you think your boss is out of his mind?
- 3.) Would you say that he (or she) is insane?
- 4.) Do you think the police are insane?
- 5.) Do you think that dotty old ladies, who steal turkey legs from refrigerators are insane?
- 6.) Is it insane to slash a portrait of your spouse, whether said spouse is alive or dead?
- 7.) Is it insane to think that a portrait of yourself shows that you're bad?

8.) Is it insane for a detective to always have a cigar between his teeth if he never lights it?

9.) If you have an identical twin who is executed for murder, is it insane for you to move into the house where he supposedly did the dirty deed, and proceed to act like him, dress like him and not even really try to set a trap for the real killer?

10.) If you're black and become frightened, is it insane for you to ask a white person if you look pale?

11.) Would you kill just anybody?



Here are the correct answers for A SANE PERSON.

- 1.) Yes.
- 2.) No.
- 3.) No.
- 4.) Certainly not.
- 5.) Probably. Depends on how old the turkey is.
- 6.) Not that I remember.
- 7.) First find out who painted it and how much it's worth.
- 8.) Absolutely.
- 9.) Depends on if you can find another acting job.
- 10.) That's a perfectly reasonable thing to do.
- 11.) Well ... not just *anybody*.

If you got more than three answers wrong, there is only one road back to sanity. Enroll in the advanced doctoral program for Lugosi Studies! Next time we'll analyze the deep structure of *The Invisible Ray*. Or as Doc Lugosi says, "I warned you about your brain!" ■



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